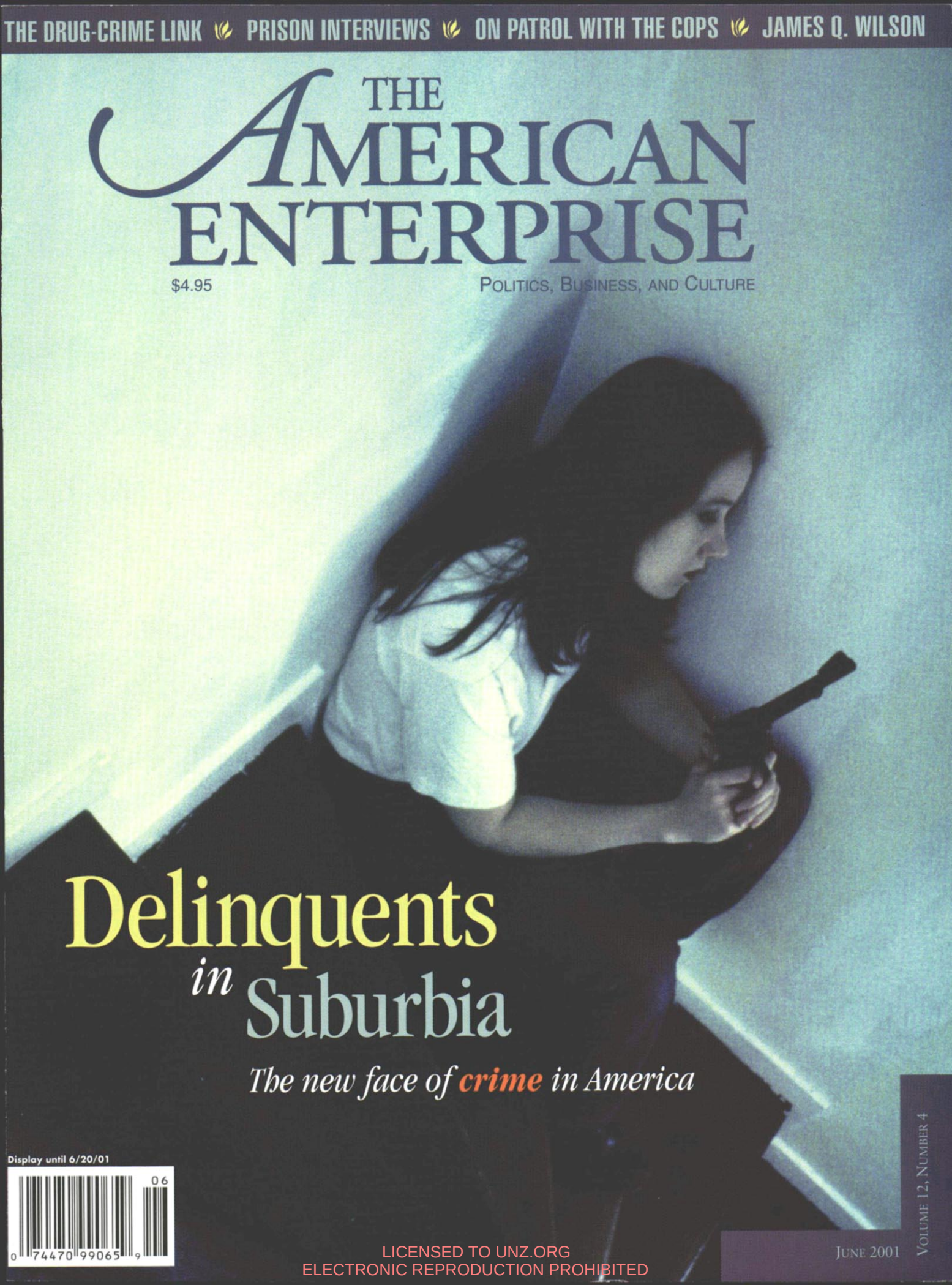
THE DRUG-CRIME LINK | PRISON INTERVIEWS | ON PATROL WITH THE COPS | JAMES Q. WILSON

# THE AMERICAN ENTERPRISE

$4.95

POLITICS, BUSINESS, AND CULTURE



# Delinquents in Suburbia

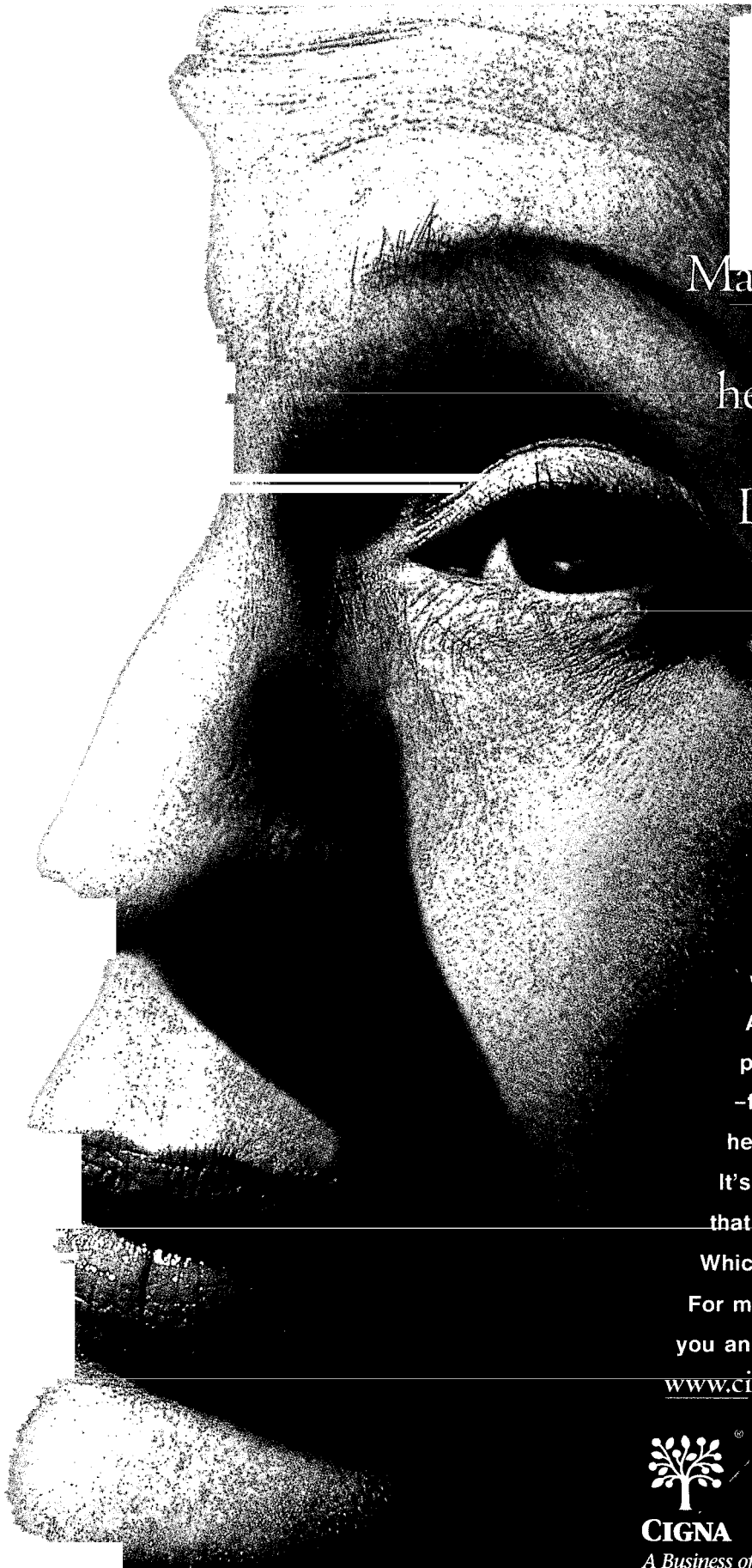
*The new face of crime in America*

Display until 6/20/01

VOLUME 12, NUMBER 4

JUNE 2001

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



# Managing

# health care prog

# Does it make y

# want to call in st

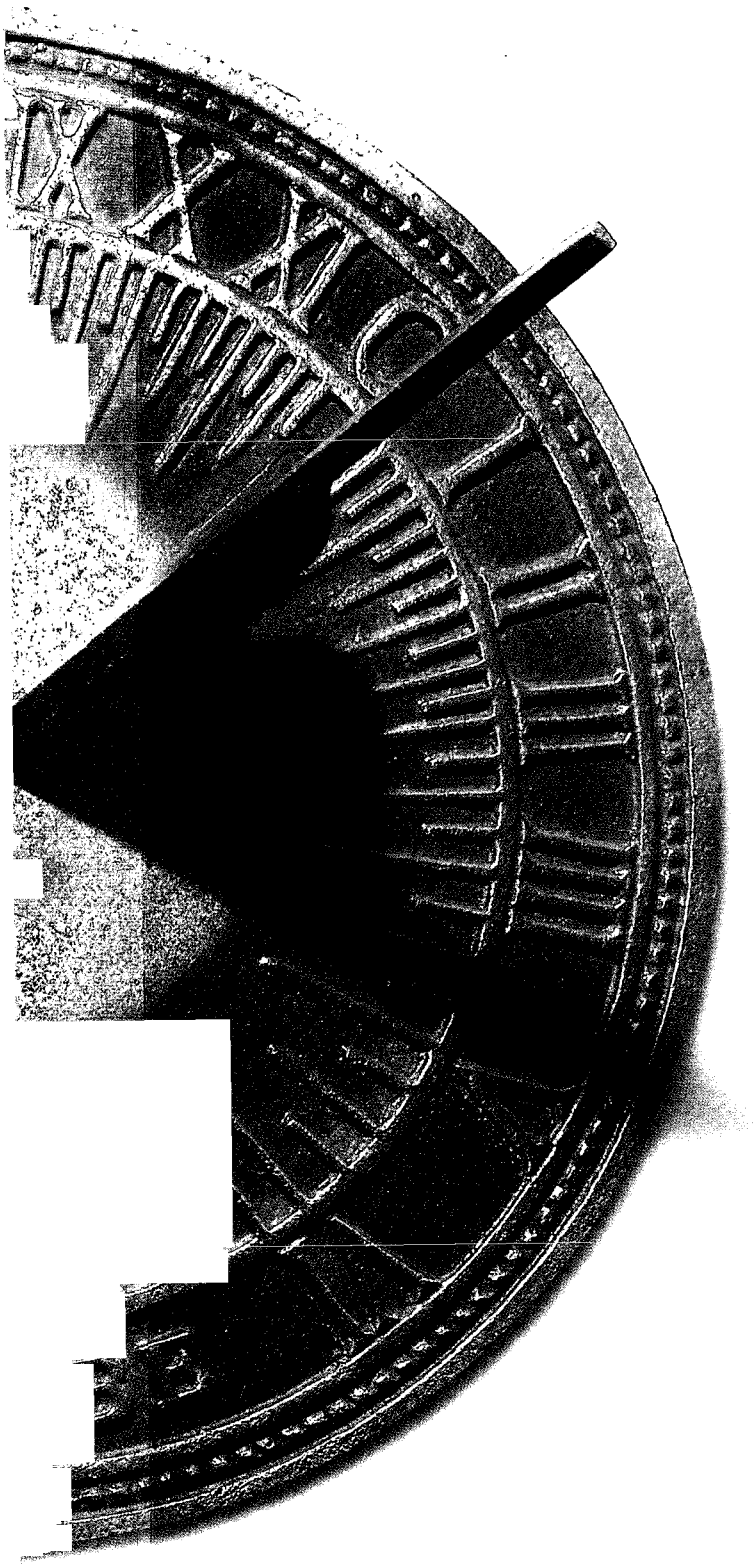
First you've got to choose
programs. Then you need to
manage them. All while loo
for the next great option on th
horizon. How can you do it all, a
do it well? With CIGNA HealthCare
We offer fully integrated solutions
A strong, nationwide network of
providers. A broad array of product
–from PPOs to HMOs, to behavioral
health, dental and wellness programs
It's the kind of health care program
that keeps employees healthy and hap
Which has a similar effect on you.
For more about the programs that benefit
you and your employees, visit
www.cigna.com/benefits

CIGNA
*A Business of Caring.*

Range of Products | Easy Administration | Nationally Integrated Networks | Flexible Financial S

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

## Mr. Kessenich teaches the most innovative math class under the sun.



They've been around for centuries. But only Jeremy Kessenich had the vision to see that designing and building sundials could teach essential math principles in a way that students would actually enjoy.

This spring, his high school class will paint a sundial face on the playground at the local elementary school. By standing at its center, grade schoolers become the rod that casts the time-telling shadow—and a new generation will experience the power, and fun, of mathematics.

For his bright ideas, State Farm is pleased to present Mr. Kessenich with our Good Neighbor Teacher Award™ and to donate $10,000 to his school, Mt. Horeb High in Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin.

STATE FARM INSURANCE

Good Neighbor Teacher Award™

STATE FARM INSURANCE COMPANIES
Home Offices: Bloomington, Illinois

**statefarm.com™**

The Good Neighbor Teacher Award was developed in cooperation with the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE AMERICAN ENTERPRISE

POLITICS, BUSINESS, AND CULTURE

JUNE 2001 VOL. 12, NO. 4

**4 BIRD'S EYE** ◆ *Karl Zinsmeister*
Crime is down, but far from out.

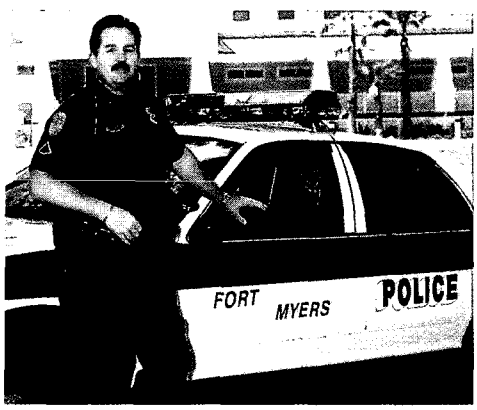
**7 SIDELIGHTS**
College drop-outs. Hamster racing. Welcome to Stalinworld.

**8 SCAN** ◆ **Short news and commentary**
Tax bondage. Rob the rich yourself, please. Spies in uniform? Day care warning. Children in film school. We want politics! Fixing Japan Inc. Aggressively gay. Donald Trump, homeboy. White House diamonds.

**13 FORWARD OBSERVER** ◆ *James Glassman*
Still waiting on school reform.

**14 INDICATORS** ◆ **Numbers, etc.**
Data on crooks and their enemies.

**16 "LIVE" WITH *TAE***
*James Q. Wilson*, America's most prominent social scientist, sounds off on crime, cops, prisons, Southern California, Reagan, the future of marriage, and more.




PAGE 34

**20 DELINQUENTS IN SUBURBIA**
*Scott Walter*
Thanks to family decay, juvenile crime isn't just a ghetto problem.

**26 JUDGING JUVENILES**
*Evan Gahr*
Inside one of the busy courtrooms that represent ground-zero for family decline.

**30 JOINT AT THE HIP**
*Ray Wisher*
The sticky connections between drugs and crime.

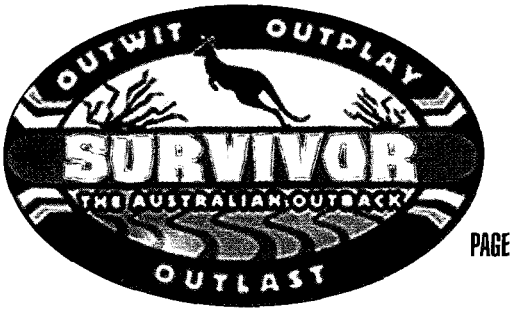
**34 ON PATROL**
*Eli Lehrer*
On the beat with some of Florida's finest.

**40 SAD REALITY**
*Blake Hurst*
A glimpse at life behind bars (and the family and drug problems that lead there).

*Cover photo: Tony Stone Images*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED




PAGE 53

45 **TRANSCRIPT** ◇ **Words worth repeating**
Reporter *Willie Lam* on the dicey future of the Chinese Communist Party.

48 **IN REAL LIFE** ◇ **First-person America**
Dad *William Vande Kopple* is feeling froggy after a fishing trip with his boys.

47 **BEAT THE PRESS** ◇ *Jonah Goldberg*
Where are the muckrakers who will take on today's sacred cows?

48 **THE ECONOMIST**
Even dictators must face the limits of government dictates.

50 **THE LAW**
Law schools and law firms are breeding radical activism.

52 **FLASHBACK** ◇ *John Shelton Reed*
President Warren G. Harding, a Clinton ahead of his time.

53 **NOW PLAYING** ◇ *Josh Larsen*
Hollywood zeroes in on everyday ugliness.

54 **BOOKTALK**
- Bill Croke—*The Santa Fe Trail: Its History, Legends, and Lore* by David Dary
- Justin Raimondo—*Friedrich Hayek: A Biography* by Alan Ebenstein
- Philip Langdon—*Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks* by Andrew Hurley

57 **THE DIGEST** ◇ **Summaries of important research**
True campaign-finance reform…distrusting antitrust policy…is your home yours?…NYC nails the Mob.

60 **OPINION PULSE** ◇ **The latest survey data**
Crime is better but not good. Police respect. The parent-delinquent connection.

63 **THE MAIL**
Liberal religious bigots. How to quash Kyoto. Memories of Reagan.

64 **LAST GASP**

PAGE 40

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE AMERICAN ENTERPRISE
POLITICS, BUSINESS, AND CULTURE

JUNE 2001 VOL. 12, NO. 4

PUBLISHER *CHRISTOPHER DEMUTH*
EDITOR IN CHIEF *KARL ZINSMEISTER*
SENIOR EDITOR *SCOTT WALTER*
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT *BRANDON BOSWORTH*
ASSOCIATE EDITORS *BILL KAUFFMAN*
*JOHN MERONEY*
*MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER*
OPINION PULSE EDITOR *KARLYN BOWMAN*
ART DIRECTOR *JO ROBACK-PAL*
GRAPHIC DESIGNER *JEANNE BERGER*
PROOFREADERS *GAYLE YIOTIS*
*DAVID BRANDT*
INTERN *SEPTEMBER SECRIST*
BUSINESS MANAGER *CHRISTINE REYERSON COYLE*
CHIEF OF OPERATIONS *DAVID GERSON*

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
*EDWARD ERICSON, JAMES GLASSMAN, JONAH GOLDBERG, KEVIN HASSETT, BLAKE HURST, JOEL KOTKIN, PHILIP LANGDON, DANIEL LAPIN, JOSH LARSEN, ELI LEHRER, GEORGE LIEBMANN, RALPH REILAND, NAOMI SCHAEFER, BEN STEIN, FREDERICK TURNER, RAY WISHER*

POSTMASTER: Send all subscription correspondence and address changes to The American Enterprise, P.O. Box 7144, Bensenville, IL 60106-7144. THE AMERICAN ENTERPRISE (ISSN 1047-3572), published eight times per year by the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1150 17th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Copyright © 2001, the American Enterprise Institute. All rights reserved.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
"The Mail," The American Enterprise,
1150 17th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036,
or fax (202) 862-5867, or e-mail TAE@aei.org

WEB PAGE
www.TAEmag.com

PRODUCTION AND BUSINESS OFFICE
The American Enterprise
1150 17th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.
(202) 862-5886.

OFFICE OF THE EDITOR IN CHIEF
The American Enterprise
23 Hurd Street, Cazenovia, N.Y. 13035.
(315) 655-1033.

MANUSCRIPTS
The editors welcome article submissions.
We will not be responsible, though, for returning unsolicited manuscripts. Send to "Submissions" at Washington, D.C. address.

BACK ISSUES
Send $6 per copy to Production Office, above.

SUBSCRIPTIONS
New or Problems: (888) 295-9007. $28 for one year.
Add $30 for foreign delivery.

## Bird's Eye

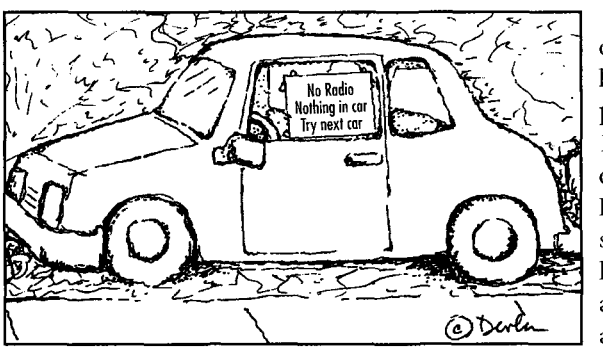
Karl Zinsmeister

# Crime Is Down, But Far From Out

Those of you who had reason to pass through New York City in the dark, going-to-hell-in-a-handbasket days of the late 1970s and early '80s: Remember the signs city residents used to post in their cars when they parked on the street? They read "No Radio." And sure enough, if you peered in at the dashboard you'd see a gaping hole instead of buttons and dials.

This represented a very frank declaration—good liberals pre-emptively telling thieves, "I surrender." New Yorkers were basically conceding the streets to the pirates, and were advertising that their radios (and all other items of even minor value) had already been stripped out of their private vehicles—either by earlier robbers, or by fully intimidated owners who'd decided to ride in silence rather than risk having their windows bashed in by one of the criminals then vacuuming the streets of anything they could lay their utterly unrestrained hands on.

The implication was that crime is normal, just something you plan for and rationally work around, like rainshowers. The uglier, hidden invitation of the "No Radio" sign was for the thugs to find someone else—someone a little less jadedly savvy—for their next payday. Maybe a tourist from Kansas. ("Try next car" as the vintage cartoon below jokes blackly.) What a thoughtful compromise with the criminal class!




Accommodation of criminality of this sort was rampant in Manhattan and many other liberal precincts across America from the 1960s onward. The subways were owned by the graffiti gangsters. Dope peddlers were treated as somewhere between harmless fun-lovers and chic moral revolutionaries. Stick-up artists and smash-and-grabbers were said not to know better—blame racism/stingy government checks/inadequate day care/whatever. Intellectuals like Norman Mailer excused even murder as a courageous political statement of downtrodden folk.

Of course, during that same era there were plenty of other American neighborhoods where the signs in vehicle windows read "This Truck Protected by Smith and Wesson" instead of "No Radio." But among elites, there was a definite trend toward capitulation and tolerance of criminality in post-1960s America.

The end result is captured well in this little vignette by William Bratton, who oversaw the police clean-up of New York starting in 1990. He describes his entry into Gotham from the airport as he arrived for his job interview:

> It looked like something out of a futuristic movie…graffiti on every highway wall… burned-out cars, litter everywhere. Welcome to New York. Then when you reach the first stop light you see the official greeter for the city, [a panhandler in] dirty clothes with a [windshield] squeegee…. Then there were the subways…. I can remember going through the first turnstile array and watching people leap over turnstiles, crawl under them, anything but pay the fare. Every platform had a cardboard city on either end of it where the homeless had taken up residence. This was a city that had really lost control of itself.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*The softness on crime born during the Age of Aquarius was rejected in the '80s. But the new consensus that brought crime reductions is now being eroded.*

Well, I've got news for you: Those soft-on-crime practices, born of the national nervous breakdown we suffered during the Age of Aquarius, are definitely now passé. Public attitudes toward law-breaking, punishment, and personal responsibility took a U-turn toward toughness starting in the 1980s. Support for street crackdowns, for the death penalty, for trying violent juveniles in adult courts, for strict treatment of drug criminals, have all come roaring back from their Flower Power lows. After a multi-decade decline, the punishment that a criminal could expect for a given crime began to rise again in the 1980s. Spending on police tripled. Prison capacity was quadrupled.

And even after all this tightening, 70 percent of Americans still believe our criminal justice system is "not tough enough." (This from the Gallup poll, September 2000—see page 60.) Goodbye to the idea that there are no bad boys, just bad societies.

Florida is a great place to examine the way liberal platitudes about crime have evaporated. For one thing, the state was damaged more than most by the post-'60s crime boom. Some of the Florida neighborhoods where we rode on night police patrols while researching this issue—like Liberty City and Little Haiti in Miami—racked up the highest official crime rates ever recorded in America just a few years ago. And the metro area we spent most of our time in—the Gulf Coast twin cities of Fort Myers and Cape Coral—proved a perfect laboratory for understanding how crime is mutating into new forms.

Cape Coral is a sprawling bedroom community just across the river from Fort Myers. Demographically, it is classic sunbelt suburbia—almost all single-family homes, overwhelmingly white, uniformly mid-income—and we spent lots of time there in order to document the troubling creep of juvenile problems into America's middle class (more on that later). Compared to the Cape, Fort Myers has more of an inner-city profile. It's a typical urbanized municipality, with a downtown, public housing, racial issues, lots of drugs. It has a crime rate four times the national average. (Most Florida cities are way above the national average, which is why we went there.)

All across southern Florida, we quizzed police officers, prison inmates and guards, court officials, and social workers. We asked them what has changed to reduce overall crime rates in America. Their answer: Everything.

Disorders that used to be ignored or fatalistically accepted are once again being cracked down upon. One table of cops we interviewed ticked off a number of examples: "We now enforce open container laws to stop public drinking." "Loitering, panhandling, and other statutes that people had completely forgotten are being revived." "When we have an apartment building or business that becomes a drug or prostitution nest, we go to Nuisance Abatement Boards and they help us shut them down. These boards used to be real unsympathetic, and gave us lots of ACLU-type excuses. But now they work with us."

The deepest source of today's sharpened attack on crime is new public attitudes and demands. As one detective told us, "It's fashionable today to say that 'community-oriented policing' is the best route to safe streets. Myself, I'd turn that around and say 'policing-oriented communities' are the key. The fact is, a police department's approach to crime directly reflects local standards—what the residents as a whole have decided they will or will not tolerate. In a place with little patience for criminal activity, the policing will be much more active, and there will be a lot less mayhem throughout the city."

The detective continued: "An example of how different community philosophies play out would be our local policy on pursuing stolen cars. In our town, we'll chase car thieves to the ground. We'll dog bite you and drag you to jail. As a result, we suffer fewer than 200 car thefts per year. Meanwhile in the jurisdiction next door, which has a lot less population but refuses to pursue, they have five times as many. A direct result of a policy of giving up."

Officer Olga Rome, a black policewoman we interviewed in Miami, noted that "you know, the new 'community policing'—the grassroots attack on crime that has taken over in the '90s with so many good effects—it really isn't new at all. It's very old. We're basically just going back to more traditional approaches to stopping problems."

She's right. At the moment I'm reading to my youngest child a history of a boy who grew up in Boston around the turn of the century, a time when that city was home to many poor, ignorant, unassimilated, and very rough-mannered families. The streets and schools were often rowdy places. But there was precious little tolerance for crime. Our biography describes how the local foot patrol officer, "Cop Watson," would visit individual homes—warning boys against certain kinds of behaviors, informing parents of juveniles who had gotten their names written down in the "Bad Boy Book" that was stored in the stationhouse (three strikes and the kid was in serious trouble), and otherwise keeping a lid on problems. This kind of stern, moralistic community oversight is why cities full of uneducated, materially deprived people jammed into tenements nonetheless enjoyed comparatively low rates of crime and public disorder.

The key is to treat crime as a preventable, curable, moral breakdown. Crime isn't something natural, something to wave away with a litany of excuses. It must be viewed as antisocial behavior that can be suppressed if people are held accountable for their acts. Officer Rome suggests that having painfully rediscovered this, we're not likely to forget it again. "This time, it's here to stay," she asserts.

Let us hope that the bad old days of accommodating crime truly are permanently behind us. Because two societal trends hint we're going to need plenty of sturdy cops, tough judges, and long-memoried citizens in the years ahead if the progress we've made recently against disorder is going to continue.

Problem trend number one is family decay. The explosion of illegitimacy, divorce, and fatherlessness that ripped particularly



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through underclass America starting in the 1960s has finally leveled off in those neighborhoods. Inner-city family life hasn't gotten dramatically better, but statistically, black illegitimacy, teen births, and abortion are all down a little. Unfortunately, the family breakdown virus has meantime spread to fresh fields, and is now doing its dirty work with a vengeance in Middle America. Twenty-six percent of all white births are now to unmarried mothers. That plus the fact that a million children see their parents divorce every year means a vast portion of even middle-class American youngsters now grow up separated from either their dad or mom. That is not good for the crime rate, as even prison inmates will tell you (see Blake Hurst's story on page 40).

*Crime isn't something natural, something to wave away with a litany of excuses. It is antisocial behavior that can be suppressed if people are held accountable.*

Our new suburban delinquency problem is illustrated perfectly in Cape Coral's malls and palm-treed cul-de-sacs. To get a handle on discipline problems, the local *elementary* schools are now starting to put cops in their hallways. We accompanied police officers on a number of haunting runaway or domestic violence calls. On one, we pulled up to a pristinely manicured new house, where the door was answered by the mother, an attractive nurse supervisor with two children. The interior was gleaming in white tile, new kitchen appliances, and blond furniture. The son, a sandy-haired boy of perhaps 13, was well spoken and crisply dressed in Old Navy khaki, though multiply pierced and accessoried in the local "thug life" fashion (some area teenagers refer to themselves as "wiggers," as in "white niggers").

The mother cooly explained that her 14-year-old daughter "Andrea" has a history of running away, and had skipped school that day, reportedly been picked up by a friend, and was apparently off partying now (near midnight on a school night). As the officer took her missing person report, the mother spelled out Andrea's byzantine criminal record—arrests for shoplifting, stealing a car, battery (beating up her mother). After a radio call, the officer asked her whether she was aware her daughter was on juvenile probation at that time, and should have been kept at home except for schooling. "I'm always at work," she answered, unflustered. "Her father and I are separated. I gave her a pager, and a cell phone, and that's how we keep in touch."

I received several follow-up reports on Andrea. About ten days after my visit to her home, one of her friends convinced her own divorced mother (who *knows* Andrea's history) to let her sleep over at Andrea's house. Of course, they snuck out for a night of cruising and drug parties. The evening ended with a police report from the mother of Andrea's friend complaining that her daughter had been raped. After enough Ecstacy, cocaine, and pot that she stopped remembering things, the girl was pressured by a white male she had just met until he got his way with her.

A couple months later, Andrea was brought home by sheriff's deputies after being caught in a stolen car with some of the boys she indulges in crime, sex, and drug use with. After arguing with her mother she went into her room and wrote all over the walls with a black marker "my mother is a whore/bitch/c--t, etc." The police eventually took her to a detention center for runaways, which she promptly ran away from, turning up back at home, sneaking along another runaway.

These kinds of stories are no longer rare among middle-class, superficially functional families (see our fine opening feature story by Scott Walter). In fact, we found serious teenage behavior problems to be actually rather common in households where there is divorce, parents shacking up with new mates, careerism and endless working hours, a lack of deep community roots (a special plague in new sunbelt developments), or substitution of money and material provisions for parental time and guidance. And these things occur even in neighborhoods with lots of fancy cars in the driveways and nice college-educated grown-ups nominally in charge inside the home.

The second trend which might have the power to unravel Officer Rome's prediction that today's progress against crime is here to stay concerns politics. Much sterner public attitudes, and much steelier public administrators (for instance, William Bratton and Rudy Giuliani in New York City) were an important part of our recent crime rollback. But the 1980s and '90s crop of tough reformist mayors like Giuliani and Richard Riordan in Los Angeles are now about to be replaced by voters, in both cases apparently by liberal throwbacks. When the pressure from City Hall to stop crime eases up (very possibly even reverses, on "progressive" or "civil rights" grounds) control of our urban streets could quickly revert to the people who brought you spray-painted subways and in-your-face panhandling.

Even before these critical political transitions, the consensus against crime that got us on today's downward path has begun to be eroded—by several years of activist hammering on police, politicians, and public opinion. Endless drum-beating about police brutality has undermined both citizen support for cops and cops' willingness to take risks to make streets safer. Renewed propagandizing against capital punishment has recently edged public opinion in a softer direction on this and other crime questions.

The effects are already showing up in statistics. After tumbling for most of a decade, crime edged up in the latest year in places like Los Angeles (where the police have been eviscerated after a corruption scandal) and New York (where movie stars and rabblerousers spent much of 2000 picketing police stations under the instigation of Al Sharpton). Violent crime was up more than 7 percent in L.A. in the latest year, with homicides jumping 28 percent. The kinder and gentler NYPD, meanwhile, has yielded double-digit increases in homicide rates over recent quarters (after five years when murders were reduced by more than two-thirds).

Could we again begin to see "No Radio" signs in American neighborhoods? Given our big new investments in prisons, police, and the like, it will take real effort to throw away the law and order progress won over the last two decades. But if we lose our hard-won sense of realism, and let the fight against crime be undercut by ideologues, we could slip back to the bad old days much faster than many people realize. The choice is ours.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Sidelights

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign now offers the course "History 289: **Oprah Winfrey**, the Tycoon." ❦ The U.S. Department of Education finds that about 40 percent of students pursuing a four-year degree have only marginal academic qualifications. ··· Half of those enrolled in a four-year university will never graduate. ❦ The United Church of Christ in Simi Valley, California, offers high-schoolers a week-long sex education course called "Our Whole Lives." Students are taught how to use condoms and encouraged to create gay pride slogans and discuss their sexual fantasies. ❦ Massachusetts now requires sushi served in restaurants to either have been frozen or cooked. ❦ When **Ronald Reagan** turned 90 in February, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to officially recognize the former President's birthday: 209 Republicans, 199 Democrats, and 2 Independents (including a self-described socialist) voted for the measure. Seven Democrats expressed their disapproval by simply voting "present." ❦ Stalinworld, modeled after a Soviet gulag, has opened in Lithuania. Visitors pay the equivalent of $1.25 to watch re-enactments of prisoners being abused, tour recreated barracks, and eat food such as gruel and fishhead soup. ··· Marx Café, "a new urban restaurant with a leftist bent," opens in Washington, D.C. They offer "revolutionary fusion cuisine" created by a "Michelin rated chef" and a "stylish fully stocked bar complete with top shelf liquor, micro-brews on tap, and fine wines" to "appease proletariats and cadres alike." ❦ **Bill Clinton** made a record 133 trips abroad during his presidency. According to the National Taxpayers Union, that's more than **Eisenhower**, **JFK**, **Johnson**, and **Nixon** combined. The estimated cost of all this travel? As much as half a billion dollars. ··· "A California cocaine smuggler wins a pardon from President Clinton by paying **Hillary Clinton**'s brother $200,000," notes pundit **Chris Matthews**. "The next movie about international drug-dealing, perhaps called *Traffic II*, may well feature not a Mexican police chief but an American President as the bag man." ❦ Two different groups of Girl Scouts were ticketed in DeKalb County, Georgia, for selling their famous cookies in parking lots without a county solicitor's permit.

Fifty percent of Americans fear the IRS more than God, according to a Discovery Health Channel survey. ··· The General Accounting Office discovered a 1999 incident in which the IRS entered a taxpayer's income as $466,800, then assessed over $160,000 in taxes. The taxpayer's income was actually $4,668. It took 18 months to fix the error. ··· The IRS plans to hire 576 special agents for its criminal investigation division over the next two years. ❦ The number of American women who say they've recently had lesbian sex has increased 15-fold between 1988 and 1998, according to data from the National Opinion Research Center. Rates of homosexual activity among men doubled over the same time span. ··· A Minnesota high school student has been barred from wearing his "Straight Pride" sweatshirt. Now he wears a shirt that reads "Help, I'm being repressed." ❦ Ecologist and co-founder of Greenpeace Dr. **Patrick Moore** comes out in favor of genetically modified crops, stating that "the campaign of fear now being waged against genetic modification is based largely on fantasy and a complete lack of respect for science and logic." ❦ A survey of 60,000 teenagers in 30 countries reveals British teens to be the top partakers of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. ··· Less then half of British parents polled know where their children are on a given Saturday night. Nearly 75 percent of French parents know. ❦ "Two years from today, no matter who controls Congress, the chances are good that there will be more Democratic than Republican governors," opines **Stuart Rothenberg** in *Roll Call*. ··· "If I were a political consumer," writes **Robert Reich** in the *Washington Post*, "I would—with apologies to the late Monty Python parrot—be going back to the store right about now and registering a complaint: 'This political party—the Democratic Party. It's dead.'" ❦ "There's no question the single best predictor of how someone was going to vote in the last election was did you have a gun in the house—by 40 points they went for Bush," observed **George Stephanopoulos** on ABC's "This Week." ··· "Gun control has become shorthand for why Democrats don't do well," says **Steve Cobble**, director of the liberal Campaign for a Progressive Future. ❦ With racehorses threatened by foot-and-mouth disease, British gamblers are turning to hamster racing.

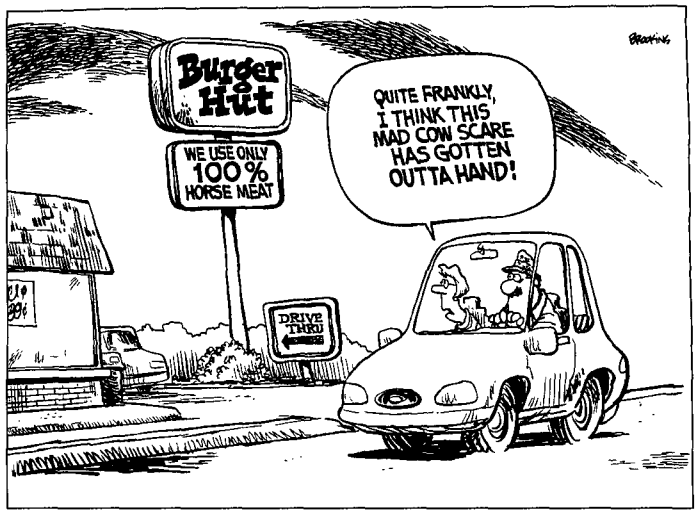
—*BB*

"I'm applying for a grant to continue my research on the long-term affects of an uninterrupted, prolonged, academic life."



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# SCAN



Gary Brookins

## ONE THIRD OF YOUR LIFE

"Tax Freedom Day"—the date when the composite American has worked long enough to pay off his total tax bill for the year—moved rapidly the wrong way over the last decade, according to the Tax Foundation. Whereas in 1991 Americans had to work until April 20 to cover their payments to the government, by 2001 this had been pushed to May 3.

The 123 days Americans must labor to pay taxes break down this way:

- 50 days to pay individual income taxes
- 29 days to pay Social Security taxes
- 16 days to pay sales and excise taxes
- 10 days to pay property taxes
- 15 days to pay business taxes
- and 2 days for all other taxes.

If the full tax cut proposed by George Bush had been enacted by Congress without any reduction, Tax Freedom Day would still worsen a bit over the next decade—creeping to May 5. With no tax reduction, however, things would be worse: We'd be working for the taxman until May 10.

## ROB THE RICH!

President Bush has proposed a tax cut with no strings attached—except, of course, that you must actually pay taxes to qualify. That's what infuriates the Left: Tax relief should be for people who don't pay taxes, they imply. People who do pay taxes *have money*, and it's obscene to let these rich swine gobble extra truffles.

Who are the rich, anyway? Generally speaking, they're those folks who, by some arbitrary and mysterious set of events, stayed in school, took up demanding work, got married, stayed married, and then invested their money instead of sitting in front of a video poker machine for hours on end. How did they do it? No one knows! But since they won't share their secret handshakes, we must trust our elected representatives to wrest their booty from their miserable hands and give it to the people who truly deserve it—like us. *Gimme!*

Senator Paul Wellstone (D-Leningrad) has denounced Bush's proposal as "Robin Hood in reverse." He seems to think poor people excrete gold coins in their sleep, which the rich take while the poor slumber, exhausted from their daily toil. In truth, the average "rich" family in America is a professional couple making their money from intellectual, legal, or managerial endeavors. They're too busy to steal from the poor. They leave that job to the government, which imposes hefty cigarette and liquor taxes on the low-income households it so noisily claims to protect.

In Wellstone's world, inequality of any sort can be redressed by feeding more money into the Best Intention Machine. (The dials go up to 11!) This world intersects nicely with Tom Daschle's Land of Envy, where the rich just use their tax cuts to have the butler feed caviar to the poodle. Or buy a Lexus. Sorry, but the truth is even uglier: The "rich" will probably invest the money—so they can be even richer later.

And what if the "rich" do buy a car? It would be refreshing to see a group of taxpayers come out and say, "Yes, dagnabit, I have every intention of buying a silver model with the vibrating seat, the airbag filled with pure Alpine air, and a horn that plays Herb Alpert tunes. I'm old and I've worked hard and I want one."

It's not the government's job to take someone's money so he can't blow it in ways you don't like. If you're bothered that someone can buy something you can't, that's your problem. Do not confuse your teeth-grinding resentment with national economic policy.

If you want to keep people from having nice things, then at least be honest. Forget about your accomplices in Congress. Get a mask, set the alarm for 3 a.m., and go steal some money yourself.

—**James Lileks** *is a syndicated columnist with Newhouse News Service.*

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Maybe "spy plane" fits in a headline better than "surveillance aircraft." Perhaps *reconnaissance* is too tough for your average reporter to spell. But the media should have been more precise in the recent U.S./China standoff on Hainan Island. The haggling was not over a "spy plane," or a "spy mission," nor are our servicemen and women spies. Such talk legitimizes a repressive government that was illegally detaining Americans.

*Spying* is about stealing secrets through clandestine operations. The plane in question was a slow-moving reconnaissance craft, clearly identified as


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

American military, not disguised in any way, operating in international airspace. The mission was not covert. The routine trip became a crisis only when a Chinese military craft left its territorial airspace to engage the Americans.

Gathering military intelligence, like the radar information our EP-3 was seeking, is not illegal, so long as one does it without violating borders or diplomatic protocol. And as the *USS Cole* bombing reminded us, we can never have too much intelligence.

The American media's characterization of our own servicemen as spies, however unthinking, gave psychological advantage to the Chinese who caused this accident and then held our military personnel hostage. A casual comparison of American naval personnel to such characters as Robert Hanssen, Kim Philby, and Jonathan Pollard mocks their service.

The world's oceans and skies are open to commerce in large part because America says it will be so. Centuries of sacrifice by our sailors and pilots, and their families, have guaranteed free travel and trade internationally.

It matters little whether this particular flight was about surveillance, monitoring, showing the flag, or a bit of each. When any country conducts free transit across open waters, it needs no justification beyond freedom of the seas. Attaching the misnomer of spying to such missions undercuts the legitimacy of these hard-earned freedoms, while giving aid and comfort to nations that would like to illegitimately constrict them.

—**Chris Gallagher** *is a visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and a naval officer.*

## DAY CARE CAUTIONARY

Yet another study, this one unassailably large and long-running, has uncovered behavioral problems in many children placed in child care during their preschool years.

In 1990, the U.S. National Institutes of Health began continuing research on a nationally representative sample of more than 1,000 children. The latest findings suggest young children spending significant amounts of time in day care will be more aggressive, disobedient, and defiant than children in maternal care. They are more prone to meanness, bullying, fighting, and making insistent demands on others. The problems seem to increase with exposure; children spending 30 hours or more a week in day care were three times as likely to show symptoms as those spending 10 hours or less.

These findings show up among children of all income groups and demographic categories, and include all types of day care: center-based, nannying, even care by relatives. This latest evidence was released at a meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development in late April.

## CLOSE ENOUGH FOR GOVERNMENT WORK

Many people—from U.S. Census analysts to special pleaders—have argued that the census figures collected in 2000 are wrong. And that's true. As someone who worked temporarily as a Census taker, assigned to get returns from the more than 40 million Americans who didn't mail their forms in on time, I saw first hand that the count is bound to be wrong. But wrong for reasons, and in ways, that few of the special pleaders (who are mostly interested in minorities and illegal immigrants) will acknowledge.

The Census officials blithely told us during training to inform those we interviewed that it would take only five to seven minutes to complete the data on the short form and a half hour for the long form. The latter had 53 questions on 31 pages. Try interviewing a family member and getting that many answers in half an hour.

Unfortunately, the detailed information which we dutifully filled in on the Census forms was not verified. We just took citizens' words for anything we could not see with our own eyes.

The women of the households were generally more cooperative than the men. (The government no longer refers to families, just "households.") Some men were not at all friendly.

A fellow Census taker, Julian Jucha, told me one resident he was assigned to interview warned him: "I'm going to give you five minutes to get off my property while I go and get my shotgun." The government will never know how many people live in that household, their ages, how many rooms in their home, the nature of their employment, their commuting time, how many bathrooms they have, and myriad other pieces of information the Bureau publishes as gospel.

One day, I faced two ferocious dogs. Fortunately, they were on one side of a high gate, and I was on the other side. When I yelled, "Is anybody home?" a man finally opened the door. When I explained my purpose, he announced loudly, "I'm not interested," then slammed the door.

I operated in an almost entirely white, middle-class, semi-rural area. Some addresses I was given by the Bureau did not check out with the local postal authorities or police. In a few cases, residents insisted they had already sent in their forms and would not fill out another one. One man said proudly he had deliberately provided false information.

While some people refused to answer questions they considered too private, I was surprised how many responded to such invasive queries as whether they had any "physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting six months or more," or what they received in investment income the previous year. Questions such as these

## WELL-SCRIPTED TEACHING

Just last fall, Michael Roybal, a ninth grader at Santa Fe High School in New Mexico, watched 23 movies—in the classroom.

He would have watched 24 except his mother pulled him out and enrolled him in a private school when she learned he was scheduled to watch the R-rated *Leaving Las Vegas* in a pre-Christmas health class, reports *School Reform News*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seemed a long stretch from the original purpose of the Census: counting people to determine the apportionment of members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

If no one in a residence could be questioned, Bureau policy was to question neighbors—neighbors who may have no more than a vague knowledge of the party's vital information. In other words, the Census Bureau accepts hearsay just as readily as responses from residents themselves.

Is there any doubt that the Census numbers, and lots of other such government data, are far less than precise?

—**Tait Trussell** *is a columnist for the* Orlando Sentinel.

## LESS GOVERNMENT, MORE POLITICS

Campaign finance "reform" comes down to this: Do we have (a) insufficient government, and too much politics, or (b) not enough politics, and too much government? The so-called reformers choose (a) and claim that the government must step in to quiet down certain political groups with additional federal regulations that will limit political speech—especially political speech that incumbent politicians and their press pals don't like.

Yes, the McCain-Feingold campaign finance bill was brought forth with a special exemption for the press: Under the proposed law, your media betters may say whatever they want and as much as they want about candidates before millions of people. But no non-press group, from Greenpeace to the Right to Life Committee, may so much as mention a candidate's name in an ad for two full months before an election.

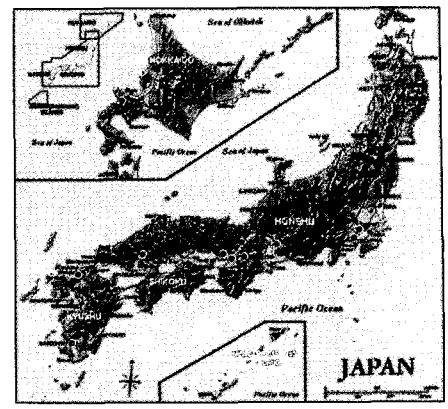
Somehow these kinds of regulations make us suspect campaign finance reform is designed to protect today's lucky incumbents and "their media megaphones," as columnist George Will puts it. In a nation with far too many citizens who don't even know which party controls the Senate, we suggest that *more* involvement in politics from private people and groups is needed. We'd like to see robust political battles, and as much public information on politicians as anyone will pay to disseminate. That improves the chances of separating bad ideas and policies from good ones.

Still, the charming thing about liberal "reforms" is the way they often produce the opposite of what they intend. As soon as it became clear President Bush wouldn't veto a foolish campaign finance bill, pols who'd been grandstanding on the subject began having second and third thoughts.

"We've painted ourselves into this sanctimonious corner," one "Democratic strategist" confessed to the *Washington Post.* Others anonymously noted that the "soft money" donations the reformers would ban were "critical to the party's achieving a 50-50 tie in the Senate and picking up two House seats last November."

In the last election cycle, the Democratic and Republican national committees raised equal amounts of that wicked soft money. The parties' congressional campaign committees, however, differed in their success, with the GOP bringing in only $94 million to the Dems' $120 million. Meanwhile, in direct "hard" contributions to candidates, the Republicans were far ahead: $447 million to $270.

It's possible the liberals who've turned campaign finance reform into a test of human decency may come to mourn their ham-handed interference in the election process.




## FIXING JAPAN INC.

The Japanese economic slump is a major factor in global economic cooling. Can anything bring Japan out of its decade-long depression? In a talk at the American Enterprise Institute, Taichi Sakaiya, a former economic planning minister and special advisor to former Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, discussed why the Japanese economy is in poor shape and how it could recover.

The primary problem, he suggested, is the deflation of land prices from 1990 onwards. When Japan was flush in the 1980s, its major banks, "guided" by bureaucrats from the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, invested heavily in prime land in Japan's major cities. But these artificially high real estate prices could not be sustained, and their collapse burdened the banks with debt and caused the economy to decline.

Compounding the problem, Sakaiya explained, is the extraordinarily high rate of saving in Japan. The Japanese save between 12 and 14 percent of their income, compared to American savings rates of under 2 percent. What's more, the older a Japanese person gets, the more likely he is to hoard capital, a phenomenon that will worsen as Japan's population ages further. Sakaiya told the story of two hundred-year-old sisters who appeared on a popular TV show recently. Asked what they would do with the payments they received for appearing on the show, the sisters said they

## ASSAULT WITH A DANGEROUS SCALE

The "Metric Martyr," London greengrocer Steven Thoburn, was found guilty in April of selling food measured in pounds and ounces, in violation of European Union statutes. Thoburn faces a fine of $1,500 and court costs of $90,000. It could "destroy" the Union, suggested the ruling judge, if individuals like Thoburn were allowed to go off on non-metric "frolics."



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

©2001 Sandiegounion.tribune/Copley News Service

would save the money for their old age.

But all this saving reduces demand for Japanese products, causing price deflation and reduced corporate profits. In fact, Japanese corporations on the whole had no profits at all in 1999. And because Japanese national and regional governments therefore have fewer taxes coming in, yet continue their big-spending ways, the Japanese government has built up mountains of debt. AEI fellow David Asher calculates that 65 percent of Japan's national and provincial budgets now go to paying off debt.

Sakaiya offered several ways Japan could get back on its feet. Zoning laws and safety regulations could be relaxed to allow construction of larger buildings (30-story towers just became legal last year). This would lower housing costs and permit more Japanese to live and work in the same neighborhood. He also commended the Mori administration for reducing some tariffs, even though this meant Japan was being flooded with cheap Chinese imports.

But Sakaiya suggested the best way the Japanese economy could change would be for younger Japanese to become more entrepreneurial. The Japanese create businesses at a rate less than half that of Americans, and more businesses were started in Japan way back in 1988 than in the dozen years since. Only when the Japanese become accustomed to starting their own enterprises, Sakaiya insisted, can the sluggish Japanese economy become more dynamic and competitive.

## AGGRESSIVELY GAY

One of California Governor Gray Davis's early initiatives was to sign new legislation expanding gay rights in his state. Bill AB 1785, for instance, requires all public schools to promote "diversity" and develop "tolerance" programs. A task force appointed by California's Superintendent of Public Instruction recently proposed guidelines for implementation. Some recommendations:

- accommodate "transgendered" students in public school locker rooms
- end the right of parents to remove their children from surveys of sexual practices

- require teachers to receive "diversity training" in order to be certified
- establish gay support groups and "diversity czars" at all public schools.

This example illustrates the increasingly aggressive nature of the contemporary gay rights movement. Rather than merely "defending" victims, gay activists are attempting to undermine long-standing attitudes and institutions. "We are essentially a radical movement, and in as far as we are successful we do indeed break down the hegemony of certain traditional values," admitted one early gay rights manifesto. This same statement (from the homosexual newspaper *NY Native*) argues for "the need to defend our own minorities, whether they be man-boy lovers, transvestites, or sadomasochists," because of the psychological importance of eroding moral boundaries.

One of the founding documents of the gay liberation movement was "Waging Peace," published in the mid-1980s by Marshall Kirk and Erastes Pill (aka Hunter Madsen), officials of the National Gay Task Force. Some extracts illustrate that movement's profoundly subversive nature:

"The first order of business is the desensitization of the American public concerning gays and gay rights. To desensitize the public is to help it view homosexuality with indifference instead of with keen emotion. Almost any behavior begins to look normal if you are exposed to enough of it. The way to benumb raw sensitivities about homosexuality is to have a lot of people talk a great deal about the subject in a neutral or supportive way. Constant talk builds the impression that public opinion is at least divided on the subject and that a sizeable segment accepts or even practices homosexuality. Even rancorous debates between opponents and defenders serve the purpose of desensitization so long as 'respectable' gays are front and center to make their own pitch. The main thing is to talk about gayness until the issue becomes thoroughly tiresome.

"Where we talk is important. The visual media, film and television, are plainly the most powerful imagemakers in Western civilization. The average American household watches over seven hours of television daily. Those hours open up a gate: the private world of

## WE NOTICED

"I'm not impressed by craft or skill."

—**David Diao**, *three-time grant recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

## DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

Social critic Charles Murray recently noted that behavior that used to be called "low-class" or "trashy" is now often imitated among American elites, who "have lost a code of their own in which they have confidence." A perfect example recently presented itself in a *Washington Post* account: "Donald Trump, with Melania Knauss in tow, swooped into *Vanity Fair*'s Sunday night Oscar party at Morton's, spotted recently acquitted criminal defendant Sean 'Puffy' Combs, and put an arm on the rap mogul's shoulder. 'I was rootin' for ya, man.'"

straights, through which a Trojan horse might be passed. As far as desensitization is concerned, the medium is the message of normalcy. So far, gay Hollywood provided our best covert weapon in the battle to desensitize the mainstream. Bit by bit, over the past ten years, gay characters and gay themes have been introduced into TV programs and films.

"...Portray gays as victims. In any campaign to win over the public we must be cast as victims in need of protection, so that straights will be inclined by reflex to assume the role of protector...we forgo our temptation to strut our gay pride publicly whenever it conflicts with the gay victim image.

"We can undercut the moral authority of homophobic churches by portraying them as antiquated backwaters badly out of step with the times.... At a latter stage of the media campaign for gay rights it will be time to get tough with remaining opponents. To be blunt, they must be vilified.... The public must be shown images of ranting homophobes whose secondary traits and beliefs disgust Middle America. These images might include: the Ku Klux Klan demanding that gays be burnt alive or castrated; bigoted southern ministers drooling with hysterical hatred to a degree that looks both comical and deranged.... These images should be combined with those of their gay victims by a method propagandists call the bracket technique. For example, for a few seconds an unctuous, beady-eyed southern preacher is seen pounding the pulpit in rage about these sick abominable creatures, and, while his tirade continues over the sound track, the picture switches to pathetic photos of badly beaten persons or to photos of gays who look decent, harmless, or likeable. Then we cut back to the poisonous face of the preacher, and so forth. The contrast speaks for itself. The effect is devastating."

Media critic Michael Medved comments, "I submit that the effect *has* been devastating. Hearing the agenda outlined so brilliantly in this article, can anyone doubt that part of the problem, in what some people have called the culture war, is that one side is prepared and organized and determined, and the other side is just gradually beginning to wake up?"

## DIAMOND AT THE WHITE HOUSE

On the same day this spring that former Yankees slugger Darryl Strawberry again made headlines—for skipping out of a drug treatment center—the likes of Sandy Koufax, Yogi Berra, Sparky Anderson, and about 55 other baseball Hall of Famers assembled behind President George W. Bush to produce more positive sporting news.

The President announced that in the future the South Lawn of the White House would be used for more than just Marine One landings and the annual Congressional Picnic. A Little League diamond will be installed on the grass, and starting this summer, he and the First Lady will host tee ball games for Washington-area youths. "In a small way, maybe we can help to preserve the best of baseball right here," he suggested.

Bush, who has already installed his collection of 250 autographed baseballs in the White House, has also said he will be attending college and minor league baseball games around the country. All this should give the national pastime a healthy boost, building on Bush's earlier undertakings back in Texas. As part-owner of the Texas Rangers, Bush was largely responsible for making the club and its park the clean-cut, all-American sports refuge it is today.

Bush's enthusiasm for baseball began when he was a boy, collecting cards and playing catcher. During last fall's campaign, Oprah Winfrey inquired about his favorite part of childhood. "Little League baseball in Midland," he answered, not missing a beat. This love of the game, contrasted with the Strawberry saga and similar reports that have become so routine, reflects his desire to nudge us back to a time when America seemed a little sweeter, sport a little purer, and the presidency itself a little more innocent. Bush is known, after all, for reading the sports page box scores—unlike his predecessor, who turned to the personals.

Bush—who says his favorite movie is *Field of Dreams* because it brought back memories of playing catch with his father—hosted the widow and son of Yankee Roger Maris at the White House in April, for a screening of a new TV movie about the Maris/Mickey Mantle rivalry to break Babe Ruth's single-season home-run record in 1961. The President may want to keep Theater One in mind for another baseball picture now under way. John Grisham, in a marked departure from his legal thrillers, has written a script called *Mickey* about a father and his boy who is just turning too old for Little League. Filming is now under way in Virginia and will pick up again in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, during the Little League World Series this August.

Meanwhile, in Washington, Bush is making out his list for which cabinet secretaries will help out when the games begin on the South Lawn. First, says press secretary Ari Fleischer, "We'll have to decide who gets to sing the national anthem."



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

## Forward Observer

James Glassman

# A Hundred-Year War for School Reform?

Nobel economist Milton Friedman once said new ideas in public policy typically take 20 years to become reality. If that's true, one of his own ideas—breaking the government's monopoly in elementary and secondary education—is overdue.

"Government has appropriately financed general education for citizenship," Friedman wrote in 1955, but it has also, unjustifiably, come "to administer most of the schools that provide such education."

Friedman's idea that the principles of competition and choice should be brought into education was radical in its day, and only in the past few years has it been seriously tried. After some initial progress, the movement has lately suffered terrible losses. Last November, voters in California and Michigan overwhelmingly defeated measures that would have given parents state-funded tuition vouchers redeemable at public and private schools. In Philadelphia, the school board just rejected 22 of 25 applications for "charter" schools, which are nearly autonomous institutions within the public system.

Worst of all, in March, the nation's largest for-profit company serving elementary and secondary students endured a humiliating defeat in a New York City special election. The city had decided Edison Schools, which runs 113 schools in 45 cities, could manage five public schools in poor areas of Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Harlem—but only if a majority of the schools' parents consented.

So an unprecedented election was set up. Edison had a lot going for it: Floyd Flake, an African-American minister in New York and former congressman, heads the company's Charter Schools division; Ramon Cortines, chancellor of New York City schools from 1993-95, is on the board of directors; and Benno Schmidt, former president of Yale and currently Edison's chairman, is a close ally of Mayor Rudy Guiliani. Edison even had the backing of the *New York Times*: "We hope the parents in New York vote for the Edison proposal. It offers at least some hope for improvement in five schools whose performance has been abysmal."

But on March 30, most parents in the affected districts didn't bother to vote. Of those who did, only 453 (less than 10 percent of those eligible) voted for Edison, 1,833 against.

Part of the problem was that Edison's opponents—the city's powerful teachers' union, in league with left-wing groups like ACORN—distorted the facts, leading many parents to believe Edison would charge tuition and kick non-performing kids out of school. Other parents opposed Edison because they didn't like Giuliani, who backed the proposal.

Edison is also about to be booted out of San Francisco, where it runs a school (30 percent black and 53 percent Hispanic) at which the percentage of students scoring in the upper half nationally on mathematics and reading tests has more than doubled over the last few years. The school board has mounted "an ideological crusade to close a school that's worked miracles," reports Joan Walsh of the liberal website Salon.com.

The early evidence on charter schools is showing that such miracles are not uncommon when the public-school monopoly is breached. Results for 5,000 students at Advantage Schools, a Boston-based company that runs 15 schools in eight states, showed a 9.1 point gain on two national tests while the schools were under private management. Researchers at Western Michigan University found Pennsylvania charter schools posted enormous testing gains over their competitors after two years.

The most remarkable school reform is occurring in Arizona, which I studied three years ago and visited again recently. The state is home to 403 of the nation's 2,069 charter schools. One in every five Arizona public school students goes to a charter, where managers have the power to hire teachers and set their own curricula, following diverse themes like back-to-basics, Montessori, foreign-language, or vocational training. Today, 61 percent of charter parents in Arizona rate their schools A or A+, compared with only 38 percent of parents with children in traditional public schools.

Unfortunately, all charters are not created equal. Many of the 37 states permitting them have laws that hamstring charters and guarantee they won't threaten the established order. One common practice is to allow only local school boards—which don't want the competition—to issue charters. (In Arizona, a reform-minded state board can O.K. charters.) Other states require charters to hire only teachers with licenses and union cards.

President Bush's modest education bill provides federal money for vouchers, but only after a school has been a long-term failure. The White House has accepted that the hard fight for school choice can only be won in small steps.

The unions see holding onto their school monopoly as a life-or-death struggle. They know that as soon as true competition arrives in K-12 education, their game is up. So when it comes to reforming education, 46 years is not enough.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

By Iain Murray, Eli Lehrer, and Karl Zinsmeister

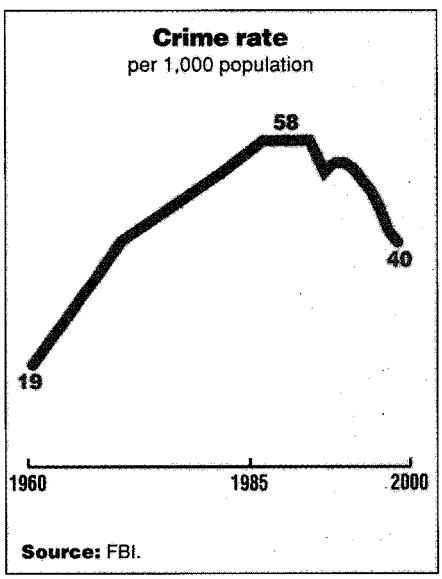
# Indicators

## THE U.S. TAKES CONTROL OF CRIME

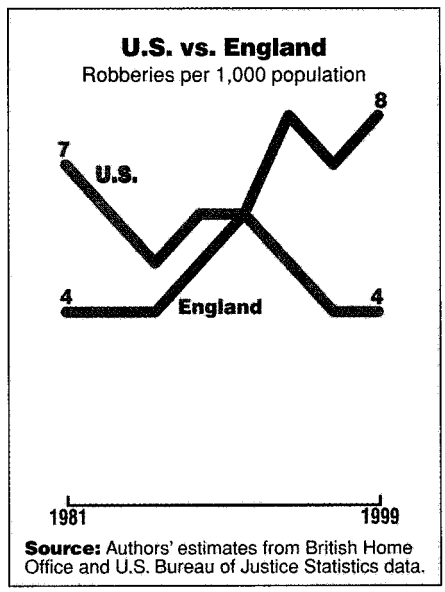
**During the last decade and a half, crime rates fell by about a third in the United States**—one of the **sharpest reductions since organized record keeping** began early in the century.

The shift was broad and deep: crime ebbed in **47 out of 50 states** and 190 out of our biggest 220 cities.

The progress may soon be coming to an end, though. **In the latest year or so, crime rates have leveled off** or even edged up slightly in some of the places where the decline began first—like New York City and Los Angeles.




The U.S. as a whole is now more secure than at any time since the mid-1960s. In fact, contrary to stereotypes, **America is significantly less crime-ridden than England.**

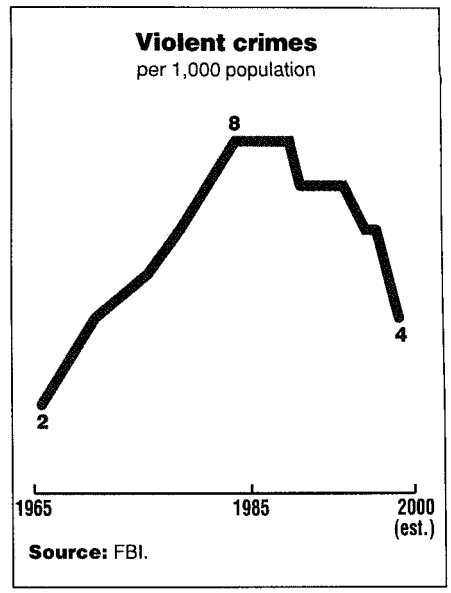



## VIOLENT CRIMES

Serious violence (murder, rape, robbery, assault) has fallen back to roughly the levels of the late 1960s. We're hardly in paradise—attacks are still much higher than in the '50s and earlier decades, when society was kinder and gentler in so many ways.

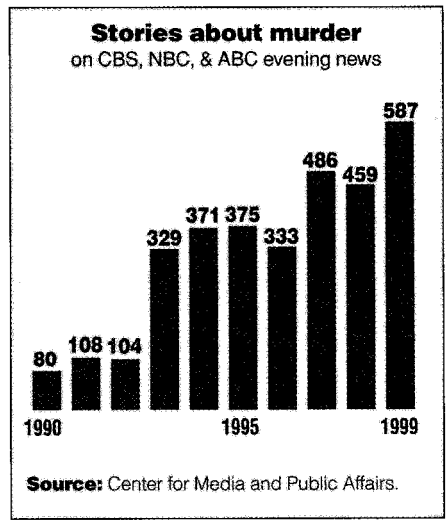
The reductions in crime are nonetheless quite impressive: **Had crime not fallen as it did during the last decade, we would see about 8,000 additional murders this year, about 25,000 additional rapes, and around a quarter-million more serious assaults.**

Murder rates have declined in particularly impressive fashion. Boston, for example, went from having roughly two murders a week to one murder every other week.




## THE MEDIA'S CRIME OBSESSION

The press has always followed the maxim "If it bleeds, it leads," but they have applied it with less restraint in recent years. **Although the murder rate has fallen steadily, the number of stories about murder on our evening news continues to grow significantly.** This plus an increase in "reality" entertainment about crime on TV means the media picture of America has been getting darker even as our streets are becoming safer.



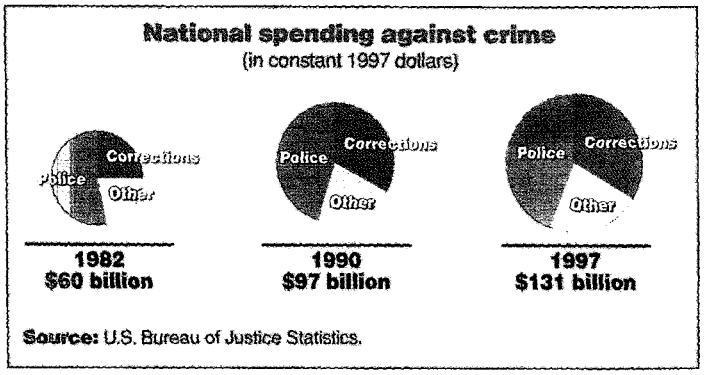

## MONEY WELL SPENT

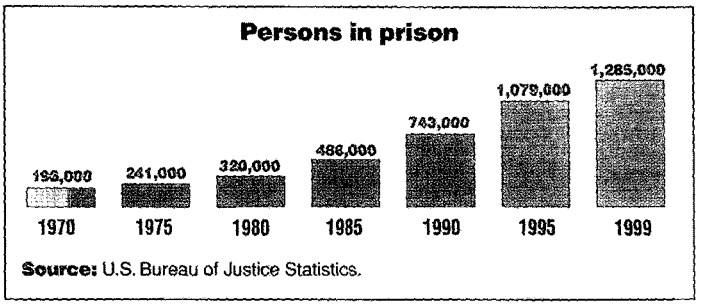
**America's crime drop is linked to more spending on policing, prisons, and criminal justice.** The costs of trials, incarceration, street patrols, crime prevention, care for victims, and the like went up sharply over the last couple decades.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Going after criminals seems to be money well spent, however. As costly as it can be to stop crime, letting crimes happen is even more expensive. **A variety of recent academic studies suggest the aggregate economic and personal costs of crime are huge—much greater than the costs of fighting back against crime.**



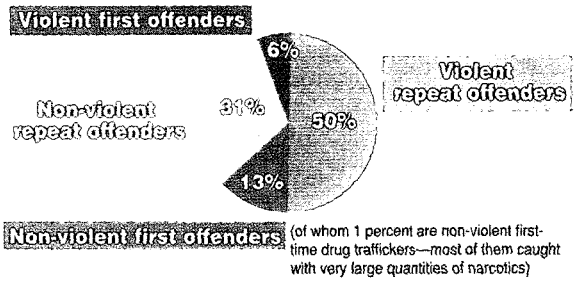

## EXACTLY WHO IS IN PRISON?

Liberal groups often assert that America's prisons are bulging with relatively harmless small-time offenders who would be better off out from behind bars. In particular, activists claim there are large numbers of low-level drug criminals locked up who shouldn't be.

Actually, almost no one goes to jail today for casual drug use. In fact, few people go to jail even for *selling* drugs in small to moderate quantities on a first-time basis.

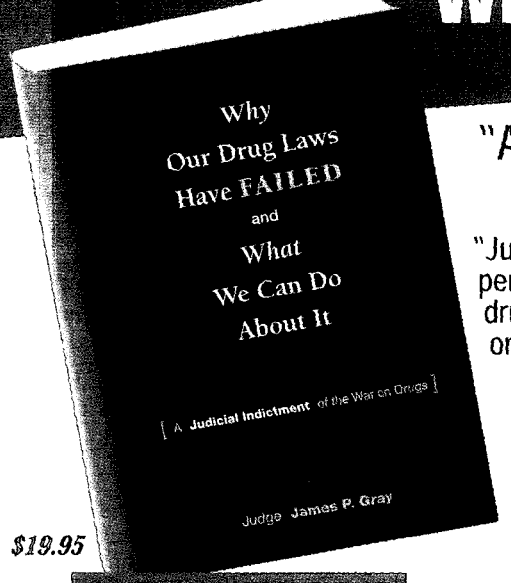
The vast majority of drug criminals, and other lawbreakers, who end up in prison today are there because they are either violent, a multiple offender with a long record, or a committer of a major felony.

**Criminal history of state prison inmates**




**Source:** U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics.


Why Our Drug Laws Have Failed and What We Can Do About It




"As provocative and topical as the film Traffic..."
—*Publisher's Weekly*

"Judge Gray's thorough and scholarly work, based as it is on his personal experience, should help considerably to improve our impossible drug laws. [His] book drives a stake through the heart of the failed War on Drugs and gives us options to hope for in the battles to come."
—WALTER CRONKITE

At bookstores or call toll-free 800-621-2736
www.temple.edu/tempress

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY PRESS



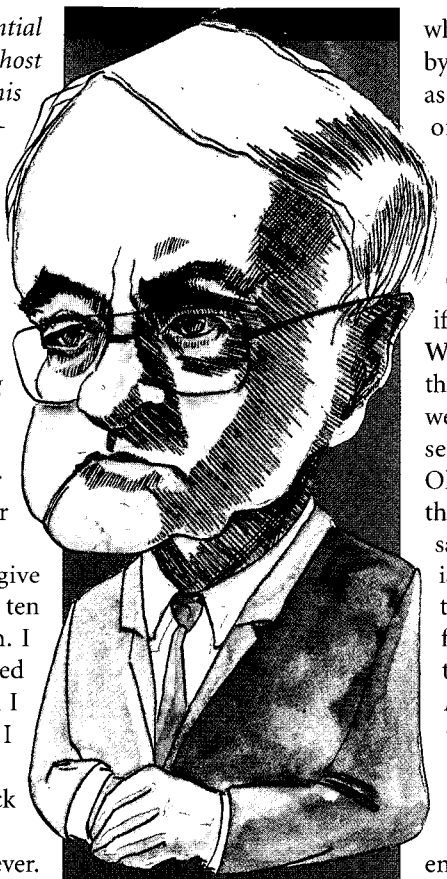

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Live" with TAE

*America's most quoted criminologist—and one of our most prominent social scientists generally—discusses crime, race, religion, slavery, regional differences, and marriage.*

# James Q. Wilson

*James Q. Wilson is a provocative and influential scholar who studies crime, character, and a host of other issues. In the 1960s, '70s, and '80s his iconoclastic work about crime and policing reshaped the way Americans think about these topics. More recently, he has tackled subjects like human cloning, suburban sprawl, and, in his forthcoming book, the decline of marriage in the United States. Wilson currently serves as the chairman of the American Enterprise Institute's Council of Academic Advisors. He spoke with* TAE *contributing writer Eli Lehrer in Washington, D.C.*



**In the 1960s, polls showed most people believed in rehabilitation not punishment. In the 1980s that reversed.**

**TAE:** In the mid-1980s, you left Harvard for UCLA, and two years ago you left UCLA for Pepperdine. What's Pepperdine like?

**WILSON:** I don't work at Pepperdine. I give four lectures a year there because I'm only ten minutes away. That's my only connection. I used to say I was retired, but my wife pointed out I was working even harder than when I was not retired. So I no longer say "retired." I now say, "I don't go to the office."

**TAE:** Would you ever consider moving back to the East Coast?

**WILSON:** Under no circumstances whatsoever. I grew up in California. I spent most of my adult life trying to figure out how to get back to California. Now that I'm there, I will only be carried out feet first.

**TAE:** In the 1960s you wrote an article tracing Ronald Reagan's ideas and philosophies to the Southern California area where you grew up and he first rose to prominence. Have regional differences like the ones you believe produced Reagan begun to dissipate?

**WILSON:** Yes, I think so. To pick some extreme examples, California and the South in the 1960s were very distinctive. Their distinctiveness has been reduced partly because of the migration of people around the country. Today, California is as likely to be settled with people from New Jersey as it is with people who grew up in California. The South is settled by people from Boston and New York as much as from Atlanta and Dallas. Our economy isn't only a globalized one, it's a truly national economy. We have instantaneous means of communication for almost everyone. It's interesting that differences persist despite the nationalizing influences.

**TAE:** Do the arguments you made about California exceptionalism still apply at all?

**WILSON:** In California, the argument I made in the 1960s I think still holds, though it's becoming weaker with every passing year. California was settled by farm people from the Midwest—Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa—who left their farms and came West to grow exactly the same plants in a place where the temperature is 30 degrees warmer. And they brought all of these rural habits with them—politeness, friendliness, instinctive willingness to obey the law. Now with the huge influx of Latin Americans, Asians, and people from all over the world, this group is a shrinking minority.

But once you put a culture in place, it lasts a little bit longer than the people that put it there. In California you pull up to a freeway entrance at 2:00 in the morning, there are no other cars in sight, there's a sign that says "Wait here until the light turns green," and people wait.

You notice that Hispanic drivers are much more cautious in Los Angeles than they are in Mexico City. Why? Because they've absorbed a bit of the culture of Los Angeles that says: "Take turns, don't cut people off, and don't honk your horn all the time." Any time I hear somebody honking their horn in California, I look over to make sure their license plate says New Jersey. It usually does.

**TAE:** The late 1990s saw the largest, most sustained drop in crime since systematic crime statistics began in the mid–1930s. Why now?

**WILSON:** I'm not sure anyone is completely confident of the answer. I will give you my spec-

Illustration by Lucinda S. Levine



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ulations. The first is that the crime rate was starting to come down among adults beginning around 1981, largely because of the aging of the population and the increased incarceration of criminal offenders.

It was also starting to come down with respect to juveniles. And then there was a sudden upsurge in juvenile crime that was probably stimulated by the crack cocaine trade. That has now crested, perhaps because so many young people were either dead or in hospitals or in jail as a result of abusing it.

Other factors may have played a role in our crime drop. Perhaps the American culture was changing, with people saying, "We don't like crime, and we don't want our children involved in it." We know the culture had changed enough to require prosecutors to send more people to prison. In the 1960s, polls showed most people believed in rehabilitation not punishment, whereas in the 1980s they believed in punishment not rehabilitation.

**TAE:** In the last 20 years, we've invested heavily in new prisons and now have roughly 2 million people behind bars. Were there better ways to spend this money?

**WILSON:** So far as I can tell, no one has come up with a better way to spend it. If we had a technique that would have prevented large numbers of people, say the 2 million now behind bars, from committing any serious crimes, that would have been wonderful, but no such technique exists.

I was once more enthusiastic about firm sentencing guidelines than I am now. I think these guidelines have shown by experience that they unduly strain judicial discretion, which takes into account the circumstances of the crime and the nature of the offender. But without mandatory minimums for at least some offenses, there would be people left free on the streets who shouldn't be. So I'm in favor of low mandatory minimums with substantial judicial discretion.

**TAE:** Are we going to reach a point of diminishing returns on prison construction or do we have to continue it for the foreseeable future?

**WILSON:** I think the investment in prisons will tail off. It always follows the crime rate. In the 1960s, the crime rate rose as we sent fewer people to prison. Beginning in the 1970s we tried to catch up with prison building, and we continued that through the 1980s and into the early 1990s.

I'm deeply suspicious of the *New York Times*' favorite article that asks, "Why are we still building prisons when crime is going down?" They do not understand the time lag between crime rates and prison construction.

I don't think you can eliminate race entirely from police judgments, any more than you can eliminate gender.

An offender isn't going to be sent to prison for the first, second, or even the third offense unless it's very serious. Building prisons is largely designed to take care of offenders who committed crimes 10 years ago. We've had a crime decrease in the last five or six years. If that decrease continues for another five or six years, I think the demand for prison construction will drop off because we will have soaked up that backlog. I hope the crime rate continues to decline. In Los Angeles, it's starting to go up.

**TAE:** And in the entire state of California crime rose 1.3 percent in 2000.

**WILSON:** That's right.

**TAE:** One prison reform you've advocated is generous funding for drug treatment programs in prisons and for people on parole. What would be the best first steps toward this?

**WILSON:** To make it clear to the public that this policy is actually tough anti-drug enforcement. You cannot go to the public and say, "What we need are more treatment programs, more probation officers, and more parole officers." Though, of course, we do need those things. The public is not going to respond to that. What you have to do is say, "We're sick and tired of people going to prison and coming back with the habits they had when they went in, and we're going to make sure that doesn't happen anymore. And so we're going to force them to go into treatment while they're in prison, and then when they're out on probation or parole, we're going to force them to stay in treatment." The practical consequence of that policy is more treatment programs and hiring more probation and parole officers. I haven't yet heard a public official make the argument the way I think it ought to be made.

**TAE:** University of Pennsylvania professor John DiIulio was a student of yours. What do you think of his new job heading the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Programs?

**WILSON:** I think it's a grand experiment. I don't have a clear idea of what difference it will make. He has to walk a tight line between avoiding violations of the separation of church and state on the one hand and, on the other, not giving money to churches and synagogues in ways that will corrupt them by making them unduly dependent on government. I don't know how much freedom of action there is between those two constraints. I think there is



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

some. If there is, John will find it, because he's passionately committed to this idea.

**TAE:** Your early work didn't emphasize the role of faith in changing social conditions. Has your thinking changed?

**WILSON:** John persuaded me these organizations were the one entity in the inner cities that had a reasonable chance of changing people by non–punitive means. We still don't know how much transformation they can bring about, because scarcely any of these efforts have ever been evaluated. Indeed, scientifically, it's difficult to imagine how you would design an evaluation. People have to volunteer for the programs the African Methodist Episcopal Church, for example, runs. There's no possibility for a double–blind experiment: You can't give a placebo to someone else.

But John persuaded me that anecdotally there were lots of reasons to think these programs were making a difference. I had ignored religion for years as most social scientists had. And I wanted to stop ignoring it because it seemed to me it was an intellectual disservice to an entity that is so important to so many people.

**TAE:** A recent op–ed in the *Washington Post* quoted you saying, "I understand the criticism [of John DiIulio] and I think there's some merit to it." Did you say that?

**WILSON:** I've been trying to track down that quotation too, because a man named Vincent Schiraldi, who runs an organization opposed to imprisoning anyone short of Adolf Hitler, quoted this as an example of a wide gap that has opened between John and me. I wrote a letter to the *Washington Post*, which they may not have published, saying there was not an inch of gap between the two of us.

**TAE:** Another of your star students was George Kelling, now a professor at Rutgers. Together you developed the Broken Windows Theory, which posits that people feel more secure and cities become safer when police pay attention to "minor" incidents like littering, graffiti, broken windows, and panhandling. Is this a universally applicable strategy or just one possible way of having the police solve community problems?

**WILSON:** Graffiti, noise, harassment, rowdy juveniles, squeegee operators, etc. are real problems for communities. Of course there are other kinds of problems too that feed crime. There are landlords who allow drug dealers to use their buildings. There are unmaintained street lights and potholes in the street near the school. So stopping quality-of-life problems as we prescribed in Broken Windows is one part of a broader effort.

I had ignored religion for years, as most social scientists had. And I wanted to stop ignoring it because it is an entity that is so important to so many people.

**TAE:** Twenty years ago you wrote a mostly favorable introduction to August Vollmer's book *The Police and Modern Society*. Vollmer, a police chief and academic whom many credit with inventing modern policing, emphasized quick response to emergency calls using then-new technology like patrol cars and radios. Have new ideas about the importance of police integrating into their communities made this technological, call-based model of policing obsolete?

**WILSON:** The error of the older style of policing was to say that police have to be accountable to the chief of police, and no one else, for how they spend their time. Community–oriented policing cannot be managed that way. You have to allow officers to rely on their own judgment about the circumstances in the areas they are working. They have to have the time to pursue things that are sufficiently complex and long–term that though they don't produce an immediate ticket and immediate arrest and immediate field interrogation, lead nonetheless to a solution of the long–term problem.

**TAE:** You've observed that police work the opposite of the military, and most other organizations: Discretion expands as you go down from the chief to the individual patrol officer on the street.

**WILSON:** Well, that exists in the military, too, but the military tends to deny it. In one of my books I explain that the main reason the Germans beat the French in 1940 in the Ardennes is that the Germans allowed their lieutenants, captains, and majors enormous latitude as to how they deployed their forces, while the French always had to send back messages to find out what they were supposed to do.

There have been lots of efforts to change the way police operate into something more like an academic faculty, or the staff in the emergency room of a hospital, but it never really takes—because the problem a police chief faces is that he or she will lose the job if there's corruption or abuse of authority in the department. But he or she will not be out of work if the crime rate goes up. And so most police leaders impose military–like controls over the people below them.

**TAE:** What is the appropriate federal role in local law enforcement?

**WILSON:** Obviously it has an important crime investigation function. Keeping statistics is useful. The single most important thing you can do after that is use federal money to evalu-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ate local programs and find out what works. During the Clinton administration the federal government did a lot of that. I want to give it credit. People at the National Institute of Justice invested a lot of effort in evaluations of local programs, and so we know more now.

**TAE:** Statistics show blacks are much more likely to commit nearly all types of crime than are whites and Asians. Why do you suppose this is so?

**WILSON:** In 1985 Richard Herrnstein and I published a book called *Crime and Human Nature*, with a long chapter on that. I was the principal author of that chapter. I remember delivering my argument as a lecture to a class of 300 students at Harvard, thinking that either I'm going to get through this or I'm going to die here behind the podium as they rise up in anger. We survived the lecture and survived the book. But the puzzle is just as great.

I will give you one theory I attach more weight to now than I did in 1985. I've been working on a new book about marriage among Americans. As part of this, I'm trying to explain why blacks are much more likely to live in single–parent families than whites. As far back as we can go, roughly to the censuses of 1870 or 1880, blacks have had a single–parent family rate that was at least twice as high as whites.

Slavery weakened the black family. So blacks were launched into the Jim Crow era with no tradition of strong families, and with all of the other disadvantages they faced at the time.

When Jews came to this country in large numbers in the nineteenth century, they were not enslaved but they were despised. They were the victims of all kinds of anti–Semitic acts. What was different? Well, they came with very strong families. And it helped them through this crisis. Blacks didn't have those advantages. To me, that's probably the leading explanation.

**TAE:** So does that make a case for paying reparations to blacks?

**WILSON:** To whom do you reparate and with what do you reparate? Do you give reparation to somebody who came here two weeks ago from Jamaica?

What we want to do, if we can do it, which I don't think we can, is change the attitudes and habits that were the legacy of slavery. You don't do that by giving people $10,000. You do it in other ways: strengthening churches in African–American neighborhoods, ensuring equal opportunity while avoiding favoritism, rewarding education, holding schools accountable. All of these things make sense.

**TAE:** Is racial profiling by police ever justified?

**WILSON:** If by racial profiling you mean the police stopping or arresting somebody because of their racial identity, the answer is no; it ought to be illegal. If you mean whether race may be a factor in deciding whether a person should be a suspect, the answer is, under many circumstances it is properly taken as a factor.

If you are in a white neighborhood and a burglary is reported, and you see a young black man walking down the street at 2:00 a.m., are you more likely to stop him than if you see a young white man walking down the street? Of course, because you say to yourself the first is less likely to be here naturally than the latter. I don't think you can eliminate race entirely from police judgments any more than you can eliminate gender. Men are many times more likely to be violent and to commit crimes than women. So if you see a man and a woman walking down the street right after a burglary at 2:00 a.m., are you more likely to stop the man or the woman? More likely to stop the man.

**TAE:** What's the argument of your forthcoming book about marriage?

**WILSON:** The book is an effort to explain why modern marriage in the Anglo–American world is in so much trouble—large numbers of single–parent families, high rates of divorce, high rates of cohabitation. The book began with an incorrect hypothesis: This is all the result of the '60s and '70s. I've now decided the changes in those decades may have contributed, but the problem goes back a long time. In one chapter, I go back to the year 1300.

The answer essentially is, marriages are in trouble in this country for two reasons. One is the Enlightenment and the other is slavery. The Enlightenment is the best thing the West ever did for itself because it emancipated people from ancient requirements and doctrinal prescriptions and monarchical authority. It created individual autonomy. But by creating individual autonomy it of necessity weakened vital institutions like marriage.

Slavery, of course, is one of the worse things the West ever did to itself. One important consequence was to weaken families.

We have removed the sacred from marriage and made it a relationship to be entered into the way you enter into a contract with somebody who's remodeling your kitchen. In my experience, perhaps because of my ancient age, that's not the way successful marriages are made. Marriages are made because you want to spend the rest of your life with someone. And when you promise to stay with them forever, you mean just that.

**TAE:** What about no–fault divorce?

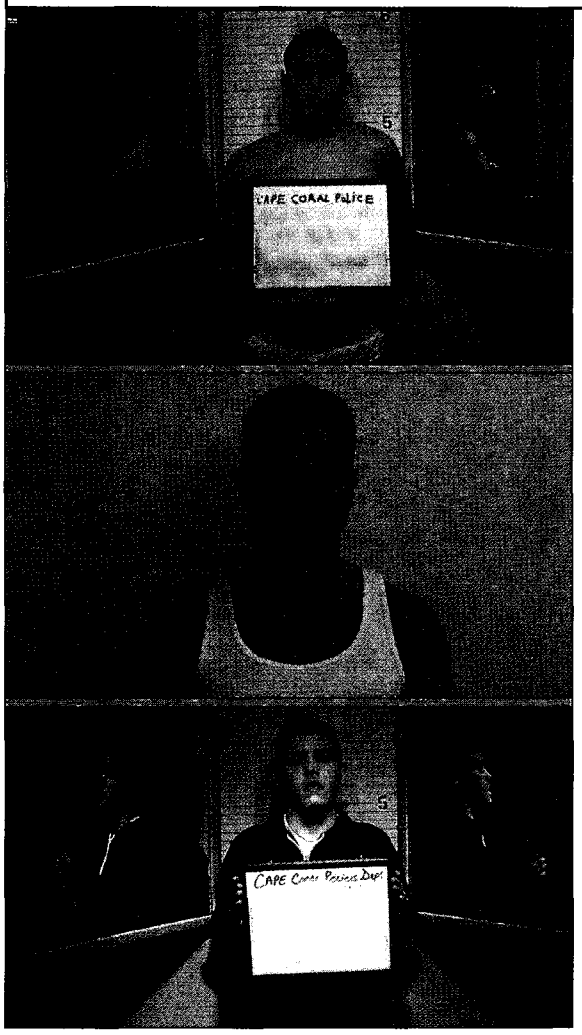
**WILSON:** That makes marriage even weaker than that kitchen remodeling contract. I think I can show that no-fault divorce, holding other things constant, has materially increased the rate of divorce.

No–fault statutes allow divorce any time you claim "irreconcilable differences." That allows anything. But if you're going to replace no-fault, what faults are you going to put in there? You can't go back to the old New York statute where the only grounds for divorce were adultery; you'd have to add abuse and neglect. I haven't figured out how to draw a line somewhere between, on the one hand, adultery and abuse as the only grounds for divorce and, on the other hand, anything from irreconcilable differences on down. But I think it should be drawn.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Delinquents *in* Suburbia




Juveniles arrested in Cape Coral, Florida. At top is "Shane," accused of attacking Virginia Ford's home.

## Thanks to family decay, criminality is creeping into America's middle class

*By Scott Walter*

If you think "juvenile delinquent" only means a 17-year-old minority male from the inner city whose impoverished mother is on welfare, you haven't been paying attention lately. There are now legions of seriously messed up kids who look just like the ones in the suburb next door. Today's problem child can be white, he can live in a middle- to upper-middle-class home, he can be under (far under) age 16, and he can just as easily be a she.

To document this, *TAE*'s gaze has for some months now been focused on the pleasant, palm-fringed suburb of Cape Coral, Florida, a thoroughly white, middle-class enclave on the outskirts of Fort Myers. The range of crimes that teens have been arrested for in the last half-year in this sunny locale is worrisome. Recently, for instance, five students at Riverdale High were charged with selling their Ritalin or possessing the drug unlawfully. The day after, two other students admitted to selling Xanax and other prescription drugs to their fellow teens. Jim Holstine of Florida Addiction Services in Cape Coral tells reporters that prescription medication abuse "has soared in the past five years." He estimates that *half* of this suburb's school kids have experimented with prescription drugs.

Not long before these arrests, five students at Cypress Lake High School were rushed to the hospital after they overdosed on amitriptyline, a high-powered antidepressant that can be lethal. The recreational users were three 14-year-old girls, one girl aged 15, and a 15-year-old boy. Another 15-year-old girl bought several of the pills from the ninth-grader who was distributing them



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

because "I was told by my friend at lunch that they were painkillers and would give me a great high." She decided not to take them but was blasé about the whole affair, telling reporters, "It was bound to happen because drugs are available to nearly everyone."

By early December of last year, ambulances had rushed to Cape High School three times for drug-related problems. The month before, ten teens were arrested for possession of drugs, five charged with intent to distribute. Mariner High School assistant principal Bob Fain said students caught with pills were not only the "stereotypical 'drug type'" but also "the clean-cut, well-dressed student who has never been in trouble." Gone are the days when "drugs" really just meant "marijuana." For $1 to $6 per dose, today's suburban students have access to chic "designer drugs" like gamma hydroxybutyric acid ("liquid G"), Xanax, Ecstasy, lithium, and much more. One 16-year-old girl at Mariner High was reported to police by her mother; they caught her with 17 pills that included five different varieties of antipsychotics and antidepressants.

For a sense of how such youth view authority, consider two teenagers who were arrested after they flagrantly dumped litter out of their car in front of a marked patrol car. The arresting officer searched their vehicle and found marijuana, LSD, cocaine, five Ecstasy pills, five Rohypnol pills (the "date rape" drug), a .22-caliber handgun, and a .380 handgun. Sixteen-year-old passenger Preston Patton (an 18-year-old girl was driving) was fearless enough to tell the police he sold such drugs for "extra money."

Wayne Nagy, principal of Cape High, is blunt: "Every high school in Lee County has a drug problem." Senior Joshua Yearout told the school's newspaper, "It's obvious that the school system doesn't make a big deal about it.... There's still people dying, still people taking drugs, still people buying and selling in the school that claims zero tolerance." In dozens of interviews with parents, students, police, and juvenile justice workers, nearly everyone estimated that *at least* half of the Cape's high schoolers had used drugs within the previous 30 days.

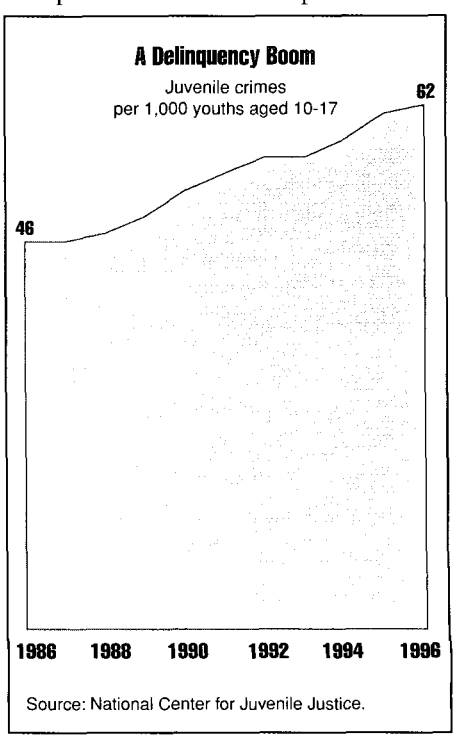
And drug use and dealing are hardly the only crimes Cape kids commit. Fourteen-year-old Joshua Gray was recently arrested and charged with burglarizing a friend's house, then setting it on fire. Gray allegedly stole antique coins from the home of his 14-year-old pal Kevin, who a couple days earlier had himself been arrested on charges of aggravated battery, battery on a law enforcement officer, and resisting arrest with violence. Three runaway teen boys were apprehended not long ago and accused of stealing roughly $5,000 worth of VCRs, TVs, and other electronic goods, as well as alcohol. They were living a cozy life in a $1,200-a-month two-bedroom apartment. In nearby Fort Myers, two 11-year-olds and a 12-year-old stole a car together; police were only mildly surprised: "It usually starts around 13," they explained.

Violent crimes are also not unusual. An eighth-grader attacked his bus driver not long ago, and if you're riding with the cops on a chilly, rainy evening, they'll explain that inclement weather means kids are staying home—"and so we'll get a lot of 'domestics,'" as in "domestic violence." We saw one well-dressed 16-year-old at the police station who had been picked up for driving under the influence of alcohol. His mother and step-father were there and were similarly well-heeled. Far from a rebel, the boy was suitably remorseful, and the cops speculated that he wouldn't end up one of their regulars. After all, he only had one prior arrest—for domestic violence.

A day spent in "juvie" court downtown brings more of the same. One 12-year-old white boy in Ralph Lauren jeans and a Tommy Hilfiger polo shirt sits patiently in the gallery for two hours. His father is nattily dressed in an olive double-breasted suit and tie. A fine upper-middle-class pair, one might assume, until the boy is called before Judge Carlin for possession of marijuana at school—his fourth arrest, the first three being for vandalism; the judge gives him 21 days. A similar kid, who looks about ten, has a bailiff whisper to him to go outside and tuck in his shirt before his case is called. The parents of another white boy, aged 14 or 15, are asked their household income. "About $250,000," comes the embarrassed reply. A 15-year-old white girl with numerous earrings appears with her mother to face charges of domestic violence with battery. Because of all her prior crimes, Judge Carlin tells her sternly, "You have no more room for any bad choices." A cherubic nine-year-old boy who looks like he walked off the set of *Home Alone* is charged with stealing; the fact that he's on medication is noted.

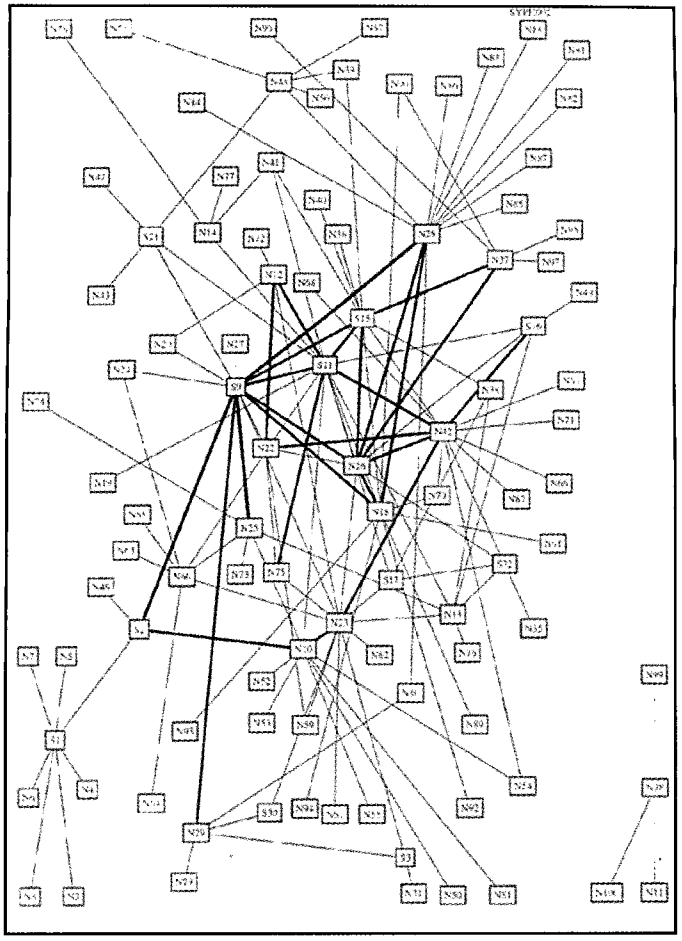
Admittedly, most of the 50-odd cases from Cape Coral, Fort Myers, and Lee County that Judge Carlin deals with today involve minority kids who don't appear to come from middle-class homes. But white middle-class adolescents are, as the examples given show, well represented on the court's docket. And trouble from kids who lack any socio-economic excuse is hardly a phenomenon limited to this part of Florida.

Jump across the Sunbelt to Dallas, for instance. *D* magazine reports that wild underage drinking parties are taken for granted in the city's poshest suburbs, even though the past decade has seen at least 15 students at a single high school die in alcohol-related incidents. At a typical party, one of countless bashes that occur when teenagers are left in control of their parents' homes, police arrested two dozen kids. When the police chief invited the parents of the detainees to meet with him, five or six bothered to show up. At larger parties, police will sometimes seize, say, an entire pickup truck bed full of beer and liquor. But that's "enough" only for scores of underage drinkers. The really serious parties are held in rented warehouses for hundreds of partygoers. A while back, one doctor's daughter was arrested when cops raided her soirée. Police figure she spent several thousand dollars on




*Scott Walter is senior editor at* The American Enterprise.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



This is the Georgia Division of Public Health's charting of some of the sex partnering among a group of mostly middle-class 12- to 19-year-old girls and boys in a suburban Atlanta county.

warehouse rental, wristbands, two DART buses that provided transportation to the party, 12 beer kegs, a disc jockey, and a bouncer. Her 300 teenage friends paid up to $55 per couple to get in.

One suburban mom told *D* she was "shocked to hear little concern about the warehouse party from other parents. 'I would have *wanted* my kids to be at the party,' one mother told her. 'That's where all the cool kids were.'" The magazine concluded that the "competitive teenage social climbing" of some suburban kids resembles "a version of *Lord of the Flies* costumed by Ralph Lauren and fueled by booze and money. From Dallas to the ski slopes to Cancun and back again, the party never ends, and efforts by law enforcement to stop it are deemed laughable."

Parents in the upscale Atlanta suburb of Conyers may not be laughing about their kids' disordered lives. A few years ago, public health authorities there were stunned to discover a major outbreak of syphilis. In the end, over 200 children were treated for exposure to the disease (see exposure chart, above). At the core of the epidemic were middle-class white girls, mostly under 16, who were engaging in group sex. Normally, nurse Cynthia Noel of the Public Health Department says, "teenagers, especially young white females, do not get syphilis.... You don't expect to see a 14-year-old with 20, 30, 40, 50, or 100 sex partners," she adds. "These girls were not homeless. They were not abused in any way. These were just normal, everyday, regular kids," she told PBS's "Frontline."

As the show's documentary-makers observe, "It all began... with a loosely knit group of friends. In many ways, they were indistinguishable from other teenagers in Conyers. Most drove nice cars, lived in new homes, and on weekend nights gathered on the strip looking for something to do." Nor was contracting syphilis particularly traumatic for them. Nicole was 15 at the time of the outbreak. Her mother, Cindy, recalls taking her to the clinic: "I felt it would be a traumatic experience. It wasn't.... Here are these kids that are high-fiving each other." Daughter Nicole explains, "We thought it was funny...'Oh, you got syphilis! Oh!' You know? I mean, it wasn't, like, the kooties game little kids play, you know?" (There were also dozens of pregnancies reported among the group, nearly all resulting in abortions.)

The group was already "conspicuous in town, shoplifting, blaring music, and defying the county's midnight curfew for teenagers under 16." One 14-year-old boy, D.J., was living with a friend of his divorced parents: "He would buy me anything and just give me all the money I wanted, anytime I needed it." D.J. provided one of many party places. Friend Kevin explains, "He'd have a party of, like, 200 people. Everybody'd get drunk, spend the night, swim in the pool. His dad didn't care what he did."

Most of the sexual games took place after school, before working parents returned home, though some were also late-night affairs. Nicole tells the story of a girlfriend who announced to the 30 or 40 people attending the party that she was going to have sex with all the boys there. The boys lined up from the back door to the front door, and "we brought out the bag of condoms we got from the health department, passed them out. And, like, two guys would go in there...and they were, like, having oral sex and, you know, sex." When she finally came out, "she thought it was the coolest thing." Children as young as 12 were involved in the parties. The girls only began to be concerned when at some parties the orgies escalated to the "sandwich," in which one girl is simultaneously penetrated vaginally, orally, and anally by three boys.

Amy, a tenth-grader, was seen sandwiched by her three-year-old nephew, who "thought that they were trying to kill me." She lives in Princeton Way, a wealthy subdivision. Her father works at the state university; her mother is a schoolteacher. The year before, she had been a cheerleader.

A Georgia Public Health official who investigated the syphilis epidemic described the children involved as "middle-class girls with parents who had very high ambitions for them for their futures. Who wanted them to be successful in school. Have wonderful careers. Earn a substantial income." The girls were just "part of general mainstream America."

It's hardly surprising that one of the high schools whose students were involved in this activity later became the scene of a school shooting: T. J. Solomon opened fire in the common area of Heritage High, injuring six. One student said, "He got good grades, and he was, you know, a normal kid, I guess."

Only a minority of middle-class families, of course, allow their children to self-destruct so badly. But even families who try hard to avoid such things often find themselves buffeted by the wider climate created by a critical mass of checked-out parents and their children. Consider the case of Virginia Ford and her daughters. Though Ms. Ford grew up in a New York City housing project, she never experienced the kind of trauma her family suf-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The window in the Ford home that Shane, and many bricks and bottles, came through.

> More kids--including the privileged and the very young—are growing up lost and uncivilized. Even elementary schools are experiencing discipline problems.

fered some months ago in Cape Coral. It was daughter Stephanie's seventeenth birthday, and the whole family was home to celebrate, along with godparents and friends. The dancing and fun went into the early morning hours. As the adults were finally leaving or going to bed, Stephanie's school friend Vicky was on the telephone arguing with her boyfriend, whom we'll call "Duncan."

Soon Vicky's father comes to pick her up. Later, Duncan calls again. When told that Vicky is gone, he becomes angry. Around 5 a.m., he comes to the house, drunk, with "Shane," a friend of his well known to the police, and some other punks. In all, two girls are driving six intoxicated guys in what one detective, all too familiar with the phenomenon, calls "thug taxis." Soon there's a mêlée, with fights taking place on the porch, the lawn, and in the house. Luckily for the Fords, Stephanie's godparents' sons, hefty college football players, are sleeping over. They repulse the attackers, inflicting some well-deserved damage on Shane.

The attackers leave, but one of their female drivers, known to Stephanie from school, calls to threaten more violence. Then two more youths show up, saying, "We're here for the fight." They don't realize they missed round one, but soon a second car shows up, and once again the house is besieged. Bricks and bottles burst through the living room's large plate windows; one of the bricks is thrown so hard it embeds in the wall 20 feet back. Shane enters through a broken window, gashing himself on the glass but too out of it to care. He and another intruder are forced out by the defending football players. Frustrated that they can't harm the house's occupants, the attackers take baseball bats to the cars in the driveway. When they finally leave to take their wounded to the hospital, the Ford family has suffered thousands of dollars of damage to its property, to say nothing of the emotional distress. The family is forced to move out of the house for six weeks while it's repaired; the car repairs take about half that time.

When *TAE* visits the Fords with a Cape Coral detective, he asks Stephanie how hard it would be to stay at least five feet from "dopers, thieves, and other bad folks" at her high school? "I'd have to be hiding all day," she replies. Her mother has always strictly limited Stephanie's weekend socializing; this has saved Stephanie from joining the bad crowd. Yet just by attending her suburban high school, Stephanie and her family have become all too close to rotten kids like the ones who attacked their house.

One of the kids who harassed Stephanie after the attack was "Brian," who complained in an interview that "that b***h got my boys arrested." Brian is a 17-year-old white kid once known for his skill at golf. His father runs the meat department at a local supermarket. He is small for his age—perhaps 100 or so pounds. But Brian is a large figure for the Cape Coral P.D., which is chasing him for drugs and a string of thefts from cars and homes. Not long before *TAE* visited, he and his gang were caught a bit north of Fort Myers, in Sarasota. They were convicted of burglary and grand theft, and Brian received 21 days detention.

From his parents' point of view, Brian fell quickly from being a good student and an underdog athlete nicknamed "Rudy" to being someone who brought the police around with questions. The precise time he began to go bad is disputed by his divorced mother, father, and their current mates, but it was somewhere around ninth or tenth grade. They learned later that Brian had been drinking and using marijuana since around 12, which he said was typical for his friends. His slide was "real fast," his mother says, "he just stopped going to school." She asked the high school to call her if he was absent, but the school uses only an auto-dialing machine that tries to leave a message on the student's home phone—a useless system with empty homes where the child himself answers or is able to erase the message before his mother returns from work.

The same sort of rapid decline occurred in the case of "Christine," a girl who got mixed up with Brian but now is trying to leave that life behind. She was doing fine before she began North High School in ninth grade. Then she began trying drugs and sleeping around, and gained a "bad boyfriend," as her mother told *TAE*. "Daniel" was 19, and "his pals were thugs." Soon she "didn't want to go to school." North High didn't even bother with an auto-dialer if a kid missed class day after day. Christine's mother was never called, and she's perplexed: When she was young herself, "I skipped school once. They called my parents, and I was grounded for six months."

Soon Christine was running with Brian. They did drugs—pot, acid, crack, Ecstasy, barbituates, cocaine, and "special K." And they stole, for money and for the excitement. The drugs made it easier to steal because "you're not scared, you don't care. All my stealing was on drugs." She helped Brian and crew steal from friends' cars, from houses—she even helped him steal money from her mother's boyfriend's home when he was visiting her house. All this thieving started with shoplifting, but that was only an introduction to the later crimes, just as marijuana was a gateway to the harder drugs that followed.

After holding out from the cops for some months, Christine has begun cooperating with the police, who hope she can help them lock Brian up. The only drug she takes now is a doctor-prescribed



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

anti-depressant. She's dropped her old boyfriend (her new one doesn't even drink), and she's getting along better with her mother. But recent months have been hard for her. She had an abortion, and not long after slit her wrists and nearly succeeded in killing herself. Fortunately, a cop saved her life. Her mother is homeschooling her. Summing up, Christine says "getting caught makes the big difference."

These are just a few of many vignettes we collected in a short period spent among white middle-class families. But a skeptic may ask, "Are things really this bad?" Certainly most school children, particularly those with intact families and religious convictions, manage to hold themselves apart from these sorts of problems. But it's also true that nearly every community, very much including our most wealthy ones, now has a significant population of troubled kids in its midst. Kay Hymowitz of the Manhattan Institute notes that the proportion of high school principals complaining of serious disciplinary problems "rose significantly" in the 1990s, and that suburban schools are now experiencing the rising levels of absenteeism, tardiness, and classroom disruption that earlier hit inner-city schools. Ominously, elementary schools are experiencing growing discipline problems. "More kids," Hymowitz summarizes, "even among the privileged and the very young, are angry, lost, or just plain uncivilized."

The schoolmates of their daughter also attacked the Ford family's cars with baseball bats.

"Today's parents find it easier to be the kid's 'friend' than to take on the responsibility of actually being a parent," a detective complains.

What is causing this growing disarray among the affluent? *TAE* posed that question to people who deal with troubled children—uniformed cops, detectives, public defenders, Department of Juvenile Justice caseworkers, judges, even crime victims. The answer was unanimous and deafening: "Lack of parental engagement." Parents themselves were slower to say this. Brian's parents, for example, initially blamed his troubles on a basketball coach who cut him from the team. But soon they were admitting that Brian "got everything he wanted...the worst thing was giving him a car at 16...we have not disciplined him enough...don't give your kid everything."

Judge Carlin has seen perhaps a hundred kids a week trudge through his courtroom for the past five years. We asked him, If you could change one thing in the entire juvenile justice system, what would it be? "Have parents become more engaged," he replied. "Lots of parents are not present in their kids' lives. Consistent consequences are crucial for kids."

Angelique Agostin, a public defender who represents dozens of juveniles a week, takes the same view. When asked to testify before the state legislature, she pleaded with them to "force more parental involvement." She admits she is often "surprised and discouraged by the parents. Some parents are angry with me as well as their child." Most of the problems she deals with stem from "lack of supervision, especially in the afternoons" when parents are working. "Kids are watching kids."

Christine's mother echoes the theme: "I was too lenient. My parents were real strict; I wanted to be different with my child. I was wrong." She and her husband divorced before Christine started getting into trouble.

So did Brian's mother and father. And they didn't communicate after the break-up, which allowed Brian to play them off one another. His mother bought him a car when he was 16, but after he began getting in trouble, she took it away—only to have his father buy him another. Neither parent helped police figure out just what their son was up to; they insisted no wrongdoing could be happening. When *TAE* joined a Cape Coral detective in a talk with Brian's parents, the father was asked, "Were you more his pal than his Dad?" He answered, "Yes, I thought that was the right thing to do."

When detectives finally used a warrant to drag out the stolen property Brian had stashed in his dad's house, his father continued to protect him, refused to cooperate with police, and hired an expensive lawyer who had the stolen evidence thrown out of court on a technicality. Brian's reaction was to sneer at the cops and call himself "invisible." More recently, Brian's father has started facing up to his son's misdeeds and is hoping some compromise can be arranged with police. But Brian is still the one in charge: "We're waiting to see what he is going to do," his father says plaintively.

Sometimes parental disengagement goes beyond leniency into utter neglect, and once again, this isn't something that happens only in inner-city ghettoes. Cape Coral detective Ray Wisher stopped a girl and four boys one evening in the parking lot of Wal-Mart. They were pushing a sleeping bag in their cart and said they were "going camping." The girl was 13 or so, the boys a few years older. Wisher and his partner had the girl call her father. When he answered, Wisher could hear Jay Leno in the background on TV. Wisher explained what was happening and asked the father to come get his daughter. Instead, the man asked to speak to her. They spoke for a few minutes, and she handed Wisher the phone back. The father said he "trusted" his daughter and that she told him she would be going to a friend's house for the night.

Wisher was "shocked. The man sounded more upset about being bothered than about what his daughter was doing. So we did what we do in these situations: We left the girl with the boys and drove off. My partner was fuming about how stupid, lazy, and self-centered today's parents are. They find it easier to be the kid's 'friend' than to take on the responsibility of actually being a parent and all that entails, including turning off the damn TV and



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

going to rescue your daughter."

Soon after Wisher spoke these words, Joseph Califano, president of the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, used remarkably similar words to discuss the group's latest research: "Mothers and fathers who are parents rather than pals can greatly reduce the risk of their children smoking, drinking, and using drugs. Parental power is the most underutilized tool in combating substance abuse." The Center's research showed that fully seven in ten kids today have parents who set few or no rules for their behavior. These children are four times more likely to smoke, drink, or use drugs than peers who live in a home with rules. Yet the same survey found that if you ask teens whether they have a good relationship with their parents, teens living under parental rules are far more likely to say yes than teens with non-disciplining parents. Of course, parental engagement doesn't just mean inflicting punishment but also spending time together, and here again the survey found strong connections between meals with parents—with the TV off—and a lack of substance abuse.

By contrast, the father of Amy, one of the girls in the Conyers drugs-and-group-sex debacle, confesses he does "as much to destroy" the "family unit" as "anyone else. We got TVs in every room of the house. I watch my programs. My wife watches her programs in another room in the house.... The kids watch it or play on their Ataris, the video games."

Nothing makes children's need for real parents clearer than observing troubled kids and the juvenile justice system that must deal with them. When kids lack parents, the cops, judges, and social workers are forced to *become* their parents. The first hour in the Cape Coral police station reveals just how connected these cops are to the lives of the juveniles they encounter. Virtually every officer, uniformed and plain-clothes alike, knows who's dating whom, who's friends with whom, how person A led person B into thievery, etc. And when these cops interact with the kids, it's shocking to see just how parental they are—they spend real time talking about the kids' lives: what their parents (almost always divorced) are doing, what school they'll go to if they're expelled from the current one, if they're seeing a psychiatric counselor (often, but it doesn't seem to help much), if they're going to church ("why not try it?"), if they're still feeling suicidal. *TAE* saw one girl come out of an interrogation room where she'd been grilled by a detective for an hour and a half about crimes she was involved in. She didn't emerge beaten down, but rather was smiling—because somebody had taken her seriously, shown concern for her bad decisions, complimented her intelligence and looks, told her she could make something of her life if she stopped messing around.

Even Judge Carlin, who only has a few minutes with any juvenile coming before him, makes an obvious effort to engage each child with both warmth and stern discipline. A public defender we passed in a court hallway was likewise trying hard to talk tough to a young client she was defending: "If it's Judge Carlin, forget it! He doesn't play." But of course these efforts, sometimes heroic, to patch the holes left in children's souls by indulgent and absentee parents are little more than stopgaps. The problem will continue to worsen until more mothers and fathers start acting responsibly.

"Over and over again," said Dr. Robert Blum, director of pediatrics and adolescent health at the University of Minnesota, when asked about the Conyers syphilis outbreak, "we see parents who are either clueless or blatantly unconcerned about their children. We see parents who have replaced caring and personal involvement with the purchase of material goods. And we see parents who are afraid to discipline their children."

> "The teen alienation that culminated in Columbine starts with parents who have nothing of moral substance to pass on to their children apart from lavish houses and abundant entertainment."

However much parental engagement—of both the stern and affectionate varieties—may now be lacking in troubled kids' lives, it would be unfair to parents not to note some of the things that work against healthy childraising today. The fact that most houses in middle-class communities are empty of parents during the day is one invitation to trouble. The neighborly knowledge and concern parents recall from their own childhoods are greatly diminished in a society so obsessed with careers and moneymaking. The transience of neighborhoods is also seriously disruptive; it is no accident that so many of the worst examples of teenage amorality now pop up in sunbelt communities where many of the residents are rootless new arrivals.

Parents also complain about their authority being undermined by "professionals." Cindy, mother of Nicole in Conyers, recalls how a psychologist repeatedly eroded her authority by telling her, in front of the child, to give in to her daughter's smoking; not to "pick your children's friends" because "that's inhibiting them"; and to let Nicole live with her father because mother and daughter were "overbonded."

Schools, as we've seen, also let parents down. The three public high schools in Cape Coral house around 2,000 or more students each and look like minimum-security prisons. Contact with parents rarely rises above the auto-dialer level. Numerous kids we studied went bad soon after they entered the four-year high schools, partly because they were corrupted by older children. Nor do typical school curricula offer much to children in the way of moral instruction.

Sometimes the justice system fails families, too. Laws in some localities are too lenient with kids who need a vigorous reality check. (Both Christine and Brian's parents said getting caught and facing lock-up was crucial in making their children reconsider where their lives were leading.) Some judges are firm and "don't play," but other judges are like the one who threw out on a technicality the evidence of stolen goods found in Brian's home. Only recently have police begun to develop tight supervision programs for juvenile offenders. Cape Coral is having considerable success with "Youth Crime Intervention Officers" who check on paroled kids every night and virtually tuck them under the covers. If they've committed the least violation, they're likely, as soon as the officer enters the house, just to turn around and put their hands behind them for the cuffs.

Some parents are afraid the law will come after *them* if they



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

discipline their children. One parent interviewed in Conyers said, "You can't spank them now, or they'll turn you in to the police." Jenny "used to threaten to run away," saying "there's nothing you can do about it. There wasn't. She's 17. She could run away, and I couldn't make her come home. But the law is funny—until she's 18 I also couldn't keep her out of my house." The government, this mother concluded, "took away parents' rights." She had tried to be strict, but Jenny manipulated her.

Popular culture is also a horror show when it comes to keeping kids under control. One detective told us every kid he's pursuing has a poster of a rap star in his or her room. Brian, though a runt of a white suburbanite golfer, consciously emulated the "thug life," says Christine. Even as he was locked up in a holding cell one night, Brian was laughing and doing his best "Snoop Dogg" imitation. As for the kids in Conyers, one of their sex games was to watch the Playboy channel in their pool house bedroom and have everyone try to imitate the scenes shown. Three Conyers girls interviewed by "Frontline" proclaimed their "love" for rappers like Master P and Tupac. "They can talk about something that's, like, completely stupid, like drugs and stuff. But it's the way they put it, it sounds interesting."

"Give me an example," the interviewer prodded.

The girls began singing, not entirely intelligibly but with enthusiasm, "I take clothes off you, and I'm blowing [unintelligible] mind.... Seven b*****s get f*****d at the same time. The [unintelligible] she can suck a ding-dong all day, all night, all evening long.... Anybody can talk to a b***h and get the b***h to f**k, but how many [unintelligible] talk to a b***h and get their d**k sucked like me?"

The "Frontline" producers who studied Conyers pleaded that parents not dismiss their subjects as "bad" kids, or oddballs. That would be "a huge mistake." In the months it took them "to get access to some of the kids directly involved in the outbreak we met lots of other kids. And we were struck by how widespread the kind of anomie, and loneliness, and hunger for structure and experimentation was, among kids all over the community." Instead, the producers "hope the conversation will be about getting back involved in kids' lives. Not so much, you know, their success or failure...their scores, what college they get into, all that stuff. But their inner lives, their moral lives, their spiritual lives—which, in our experience at least, are going unheeded."

Stories like those we've chronicled here offer "insight into the roots of the teen alienation and emptiness that culminated in Columbine," suggests the Manhattan Institute's Hymowitz. It all adds up "to a devastating portrait of *adults*, who were not neglectful or abusive in any conventional sense, but who, apart from lavish houses and abundant entertainment, have nothing of substance to pass on to children." Dangerously delinquent suburban children, she states, reflect "a spiritual and emotional void within contemporary American middle-class culture."

If America is to remain a humane nation, we will need real parents acting to keep their children's natural barbarism at bay, while also offering them a noble personal code and the encouragement to seek a deeper and purer life. As many sad affluent kids from across America can attest, money and "freedom" are simply no substitutes for that kind of hard guidance and love from Mom and Dad.

# Judging

Juvenile court judge John Carlin.

It's barely past nine o'clock on a crisp Wednesday morning in Fort Myers, Florida. On the fifth floor of the Lee County Justice Center, defendants, their family members and lawyers are squeezed into Courtroom C. Soon the bailiff will instruct this motley crew to "all rise" for the honorable Judge John Carlin. Meanwhile, a court clerk pops her head inside the blond wood courtroom. Surveying the scene, she says to nobody in particular, "All the old-timers are here."

Whether handcuffed in orange prison-style jumpsuits or squeezed onto the spectator benches, the defendants seem a weary, almost blasé lot. A few may hang their heads in shame, but most appear to look down in boredom as they wait to huddle with defense lawyers and enter a plea. Some defendants whisper and snicker among themselves with the insouciance of schoolhouse smart-alecks. Other doze off. Are they weary with age? Hardly. Many of the "old-timers" assembled for this juvenile court don't look old enough to shave. The one-quarter who are girls never will. Most of them stare blankly as Judge Carlin struggles to find a program that, he emphasizes, will "meet their needs."

Don't let that touchy-feely language fool you. Elected in 1996 as judge for the Twentieth Judicial Circuit, which includes Fort Myers and its suburb Cape Coral, Carlin is bereft of liberal sentimentality. From extensive interviews and two days in his courtroom, it looks like Carlin does most everything right. That's why watching him is profoundly disheart-


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*By Evan Gahr*

# Juveniles

ening. Just how much can a good judge do? Is he ultimately an ineffectual paper-pusher? Faced with young criminals who almost universally come from broken families, can he really set them straight?

This court is ground zero for the decline of the two-parent home. One memorable mother-and-daughter team appeared in Judge Carlin's court, both in tight jeans and thick make-up. Mom and the young woman she's raising alone each had a previous offense for assaulting the mother's live-in boyfriend. If that's what goes on inside the home, is it any surprise the girl gets in trouble outside?

Carlin struggles to be judge, jury, uncle, and father to these kids. As they teeter on the point of no return, he tries to rescue them from a lifetime of criminality. The juvenile justice system in Florida, he says, is ultimately geared toward rehabilitation. "Juvenile court is still aimed at figuring out what can we do to punish this child so he won't continue in a life of crime. The system has to let them know there are consequences for their bad choices," Carlin explains. "My job is to help those children."

Televised court battles may give viewers the impression that justice is meted out at an excruciatingly slow and deliberative pace. Carlin's courtroom reveals the opposite. The sheer volume of cases means each one can't take more than a few minutes. Starting at roughly 10:30 a.m., Carlin heard about 50 cases in two hours. This is not so much revolving-door justice as bakery-style justice: Fidgety "clients" and their relatives sit restlessly in the court waiting area. A bailiff keeps the process moving by calling out names of defendants "on deck," and justice is served as quickly as possible.

When defendants finally stand before Judge Carlin he swears them in at rapid fire; often, swearing to tell the truth is the only time the juvenile stands up straight. The judge always asks the defendant if his or her plea was entered without coercion. He repeats certain phrases by rote, almost like an auctioneer, asks a few general questions, or mentions that he remembers the kid from a previous appearance. "Each child has a story to tell," he says later. "But that doesn't excuse their behavior."

The story is painfully obvious even before the defendant enters his or her plea. Most, judging by their mannerisms and slouch, act not so much guilty as indifferent. The racial mix looks like, well, America—black, Caucasian, Hispanic, Asian. Their parents and family members are dressed in everything from cut-off blue jeans to business suits. Others wear uniforms for hotel or chain restaurant jobs.

Despite the diversity, however, the defendants start to look and sound alike. When their names are called they shuffle forward, usually with head down. Few speak above a whisper, and complete sentences are even rarer. "Do you have gum in your mouth?" Carlin asks one youngster. He signals to the bailiff to bring a trash can so the kid can spit it out.

Charges run the gamut from trespass to aggravated battery; car theft is the most common. (For more serious crimes, prosecutors generally have kids tried as adults.) As they enter their plea, Carlin scans the computer printouts with information on each kid. Sometimes there is no need to consult the paper work. "My memory is you had a bad attitude," Carlin tells a kid accused of trespass. One of the youngest defendants, a black boy well under five feet, is 13. Accused of aggravated battery and possession of drug paraphernalia, he stands silently before the judge. His mother (presumably), dressed in jeans and a pink sweater, stands expressionless by his side. The plea is entered, and like all other defendants, the pint-sized miscreant walks off to receive the required paperwork from a bailiff seated to Carlin's left. He and his mother are given instructions on when to return to court for sentencing.

Most "clients" decide upon a plea after consultations with their lawyer inside the courtroom or in the drab corridors outside. A few clients have hired their own lawyers, but most are from the public defender's office. The lawyers, like the judge, serve several roles. "So he needs to go to school tomorrow?" one mother asks a defense lawyer outside the courtroom as her son stands by. "He needs to go every day," the lawyer explains patiently. "I better find you in school today," the lawyer says, shifting his attention to the kid. "You've done this to yourself, landing in trouble."

Occasionally, adults actually discipline their own kids. Outside the courtroom, a middle-aged man tells a probation officer that his nearby son—or is it grandson?—"has to learn to grow up and shut up." The defense attorney, however, focuses on the judicial question only. Arrested for brandishing a weapon on school grounds, the boy has a good chance to beat the rap. "I don't think you should plead guilty, because of an illegal search," the lawyer says, promising to have an investigator from his office build a case against the cops.

> This court is ground-zero for the decline of the two-parent family.

One floor above Courtroom C is Robert Jacobs' office. The veteran defense attorney is Public Defender for the Twentieth Judicial Circuit. Even his own grandmother still asks, "How can you defend these people?" But vigorously defend he does, from literally the moment they enter the office. In the reception area, handy blue cards order criminal suspects not to talk to

*Evan Gahr is a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute.*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At sentencing, Judge Carlin becomes a cross between Oprah and a strict school principal.

cops and list their Miranda rights in English and Spanish.

But Jacobs is no William Kuntsler. When interviewed, he resists several invitations either to blame society for the kids' crimes or to accuse police of railroading innocent victims. Asked about the alarming increase in juvenile crime, he simply replies, "You've got to start prevention at an early age." Still, Jacobs is unapologetic about "zealously defending" the rights of the accused.

Even in the public defender's office, however, rights don't make right. Asked if she helps to spring accused criminals on what many call "technicalities," Angelique Agoston, an assistant public defender who specializes in youth cases, says she has a firm duty to protect her clients' rights. But, she adds candidly, "I've had cases where clients commit crimes, and I file motions to suppress the evidence, and it's dropped. I try to explain to them," she says, "that next time they might not be so lucky. I may be the only person telling them that. I try to give counsel and explain there are other ways to behave."

There is a big audience for such advice. In the latest year, 104,176 Florida juveniles were arrested for delinquency; they were charged with committing 150,747 crimes. Good news for feminists: The gender gap is closing. Girls are now one of every four juvenile offenders in Florida; five years ago, it was one out of five.

Juvenile crime is decreasing in some categories—like auto theft—and rising in others. Aggravated assault and battery by juveniles increased 25 percent over the last half decade. The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) speculates this is mostly domestic violence—a rather literal sign of growing family breakdown.

The total rate of juvenile crime in Florida peaked in the mid '90s, coinciding with the state's decision to toughen sentences and build more holding facilities for delinquents. About 5,000 sentenced juveniles are incarcerated in residential facilities on any given day. Facilities are divided into four categories. Maximum Risk is toughest and resembles a maximum security adult prison, the Department says. Juveniles stay there from 18 months to 3 years. The next level down is "High Risk," with average stays of 15 months. Sex offenders are confined to these places.

If your crime is less severe, you go to a moderate risk facility, which include boot camps, wilderness camps, and vocational work programs. The least serious offenses can land you in "Low-Risk" residential facilities, like family group homes and short-term wilderness programs. Some first-time offenders avoid all these facilities if they and prosecutors agree to a "diversion program." In such cases, the youngster avoids any court record. Instead, the Department of Juvenile Justice, through private subcontractors, arranges for him to receive counseling.

Thursday afternoon is disposition time for cases tried earlier. Four lawyers from the Public Defender's Office handle a total of 95 cases on the docket (some are no-shows). They congregate on the left side of the courtroom; prosecutors and a representative from the Department of Juvenile Justice gather on the right side. When the defendant is called for sentencing, he approaches the bench with any adults accompanying him.

Judge Carlin often issues a tougher sentence than the DJJ recommends. "Why is the Department recommending probation when he was already on probation?" Carlin asks at one point. The DJJ representative scans the chart and promises to provide an explanation.

At sentencing, Judge Carlin becomes a cross between Oprah and a strict school principal. He seems quite empathetic. At the same time, he won't tolerate excuses from either parent or child. On Thursday afternoon, for example, a father in cut off-jeans and a bowling shirt admits he hasn't started homeschooling his son as promised. When Carlin presses for an explanation of the delay, the father resorts to a tortuous answer about the difficulty of obtaining supplies. "He needs an education," the judge almost pleads. "He has not been in school in two months."

A similar scenario plays out when a teenage girl and her similarly dressed mother stand before Carlin. The mother sheepishly admits she has not followed through on her promises to tutor her daughter at home. Under pressure from the judge, she promises to begin with all deliberate speed. Carlin then turns to the defendant. "You are skating on thin ice," he tells the girl before placing her on probation. "You have no more room for any more bad choices."

One bad choice in this courtroom is to cross the judge or not admit your mistakes. When a defendant tells Carlin he didn't really steal from his victim, the judge replies sarcastically, "He wanted you to have his money?" Exceeding the DJJ's recommendation for probation, Carlin says the boy needs the "structured program" provided by residential facilities. Later, when a hulking teenager appears before the judge, he remembers the boy and his mother (not present this time) all too well from a previous trial. "Bobby was disruptive. And the mother was causing more trouble than he was," Carlin says. "I don't think probation will meet his needs." Bobby, a high school senior, does not understand why a little robbery should stand between him and the basketball team. It was a "little mistake," he explains. "I should not go to no program."

Carlin decides that's exactly where he belongs. "You are an habitual offender. And I want to make sure you don't go to [adult] prison."

But can he? Can anyone? According to the Department of Juvenile Justice, approximately 55 percent of the youths "who commit crimes, when tracked over a three-year period, do not receive additional charges. Recidivism remains a problem, however; overall about two out of three juvenile offenders within a year of release from a day treatment or residential program have subsequent delinquency referrals or arrests, and about 35 percent have subsequent commitments to a juvenile program or land in adult prison or probation."

The plain reading of these numbers is that Judge Carlin and so many other men and women who struggle to set these kids straight are often tilting at windmills. Roughly one-third of the boys and girls who pass through his courtroom seem destined for a life of crime. Sadly, until family deterioration is reversed, "old-timers" are likely to remain a permanent fixture of juvenile court.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# The truth will set you free

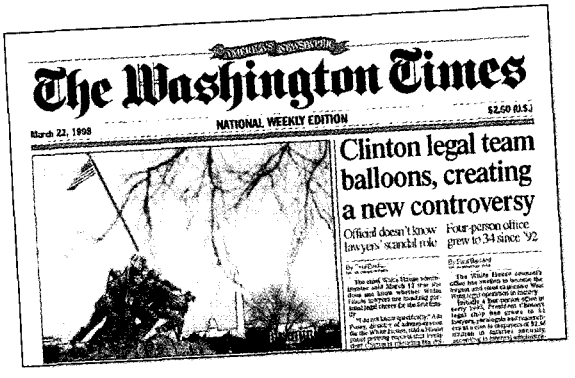
There's something downright invigorating about knowing the truth. No unanswered questions. No cynicism or self-serving misinformation from clever folks in expensive suits. Just the certainty that no matter what happens you will be well-informed and ready to meet the world.

Does that sound good to you?

If so, we'd like to invite you to subscribe to *The Washington Times National Weekly Edition*, the only nationally circulated newspaper in the country with the courage and conviction to cover the news honestly.

Every week, we'll bring you a fresh, honest, unbiased look at the people and events that shape the news in Washington, D.C. and around the world. No spin. No hidden agenda. Just vigorous, unapologetic journalism and clean, crisp writing.

Isn't it about time you embraced the truth?




---

☑ **YES!** Start my subscription to *The Washington Times National Weekly Edition* according to the terms I've indicated below. Rush me my FREE copy of *Capital Contacts.**

☐ 1 Year **Only $59.95** ☐ 2 Years **Only $89.95** ☐ 6 Months **Only $34.95**

**Choose Payment Method:** ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMEX ☐ Discover ☐ Check Enclosed ☐ Bill Me

Name _____

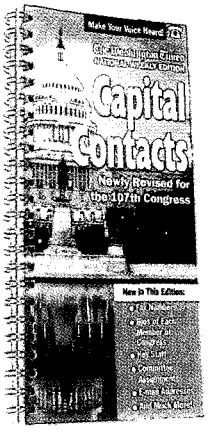
Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Credit Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____ Phone _____




Remember, you pay their salaries! Don't be shy about telling your Senators and Congressmen exactly what you want! Now you can with *Capital Contacts* — **YOURS FREE** with your one- or two-year paid subscription to *The Washington Times National Weekly Edition*. This hefty, 190-page, spiral-bound guide puts the phone and fax numbers of every U.S. Senator, Congressman, government agency, and White House Cabinet member at your fingertips. This book shows you how it's done and provides proven inside tips for reaching your elected representatives!

*Complimentary copy of *Capital Contacts* available for 1- or 2-year paid subscribers only (while supplies last).
Make checks payable to: *The Washington Times NWE.* Clip and mail with payment to: PO Box 96601, Washington, DC 20090

**For lightning-fast delivery, call 1-800-363-9118 (Mention express code: 8001)**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Joint at the Hip

## The powerful link between drugs and crime

*By Ray Wisher*

My partner, Tony G., tossed another manila crime file towards me in disgust. I picked it up and read the details. Apparently, a business owner had hired a man to do some work and the guy ended up stealing a bunch of equipment. The suspect pawned the property and used the money to buy crack. I pointed to my stack of files. "I've got a couple just like this in my pile." Typically, the wrongdoer doesn't even try to hide the fact he is stealing. When caught, he falls back on the excuse that he's an addict and needs treatment, not punishment. Yet in my experience, the vast majority of addicts either resist any treatment or fail to follow through with it.

As my fellow cops can tell you, drugs and crime go together like gum and sidewalks, and "legalizing" the drugs won't change that sticky connection. Drugs will continue to lead to crime and to drag non-drug-takers into the crime scene.

Take the property crimes that make up much of my workload. Even if drugs were legalized and (as proponents claim) drug prices fell as a result, the typical addict would still end up unable to support his habit because the typical addict can't hold a job, period. Nor can he bring himself to stay in treatment without some outside coercion.

One teenage girl mixed up with some of my worst juvenile thieves, for example, explains that her parents and the parents of her criminal friends are all generous with money, and the gang never lacked cash for the cheap drugs like marijuana. But while their indulgent moms and dads gave them enough handouts to buy all the beer and joints they could consume, there wasn't enough cash for the $100 or so a night needed for powder cocaine—"the champagne of drugs," as she puts it. And so she and her friends began stealing from relatives, neighbors, classmates, strangers. If pot, the drug most of these kids started out with, had been legal, they and many more like them would only have been encouraged to move on, as they did, to harder drugs which require crime to afford.

Nor would legal drugs have kept this girl from the many problems she experienced. Her drug-taking caused her to hang out with thug wannabes; it caused her "A" student grades to tumble; it diminished her resistance to promiscuity and hooliganism. After she joined the drug scene, her self-respect and her respect for other people and their property went out the window. The street cost of her narcotics was only a minor factor in what you could call her de-civilization.

Drug abuse is a threat on many levels. For one thing, the crimes committed by druggies are a considerable drain on both our economy and police time. Recently one of my suspects, who stole equipment from his employer, was arrested for stealing and pawning property from another set of victims. He told the judge he was out of control and needed help. The judge, considering thieving non-violent, released him on a small bond. Back out on the street, the suspect continues to steal to pay for crack—a very cheap drug, by the way—while I struggle to compile the necessary paperwork to make an arrest on his *first* set of offenses.

Drugs make the addict do things he would not normally do. One of my first calls when I was assigned to take photos of crime scenes was to document a grandmother who had a claw hammer embedded in her skull by her grandson. She had refused to give him ten dollars so he could buy more crack. When crack arrived in our area scores and scores of crimes followed, ranging from bad checks and prostitution to robbery and murder, all of them related directly to crack's addictive power.

The vast majority of criminals we arrest are drug users to one degree or another. There is a saying around here, "Not all thieves are dopers but all dopers are thieves." One local "fence" supplied drugs to an entire group of high schoolers by trading them their highs in return for guns, jewelry, and other goods the kids stole.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I always ask those who argue for the legalization of drugs the simple question, "Even if you legalize it, how does the addict pay for it?" The question is usually followed by a pregnant pause and a bewildered look. Is this country prepared to pay each addict whatever his habit costs, whenever he demands it? If not, then legalizing drugs won't lower the number of bad guys I have to catch.

**Drugs and crime go together like gum and sidewalks, and "legalizing" the drugs won't change that sticky connection.**

If you don't believe that drugs can take decent, normal people and spin them around to horrific behavior, let me give you a couple of ordinary examples. In one case I had, a woman's house was burglarized; her checkbook, jewelry, and clothes were taken. The victim believed her addicted friend was responsible; so I interviewed the suspect's husband. He told me she was indeed addicted to crack. In the beginning she took powder cocaine occasionally "for recreational use." Then she tried crack once, and the next thing he knew she had left him and two children to prostitute herself on the street.

He was trying to divorce her but couldn't find her to serve the papers as she moved from one cheap motel to another. She had taken up with drug dealers from Fort Myers and begun passing bad checks and stealing. To help me find her, he handed me a photo of the family—a smiling, clear-eyed, attractive blonde with her loving husband and two children, a boy and girl around nine or ten. As I took the picture, he dropped his eyes from mine, perhaps feeling guilty he hadn't found a way to save his wife. (This is not unusual. Crackheads are great at affixing blame to others.)

When I finally found and arrested her weeks later, she bore little resemblance to the woman in the family portrait. Gaunt, desperate, alternately lying and begging for forgiveness, she went through the classic withdrawal symptoms while I dealt with her.

Tony G. had a similar case, where the son of a retired police officer stole the old man's four pistols and sold them for crack. (Crackheads usually steal from their parents at some point.) After one of the guns was used in a shooting, I went with Tony to a small, dirty motel to interview the skinny suspect. He denied everything, even though the boxes for the pistols were found in his car trunk. He zigzagged between complete denial and trying to work a deal with us so he wouldn't go to jail (the shame of prison meant nothing to him, but the prospect of no crack was horrifying).

We arrested him a week later. It was a sad sight to see the son of a decent, law-abiding man, crammed in the little motel room with his own six-year-old son. Trash was everywhere, along with half-eaten food and dirty clothes. His son, a bright little boy, sat reading a book while we waited for his grandfather to pick him up. He didn't know what was going on, but his dad figured out Tony was trying to avoid having the kid see his father arrested. So the suspect began complaining aloud about how we were ruining his Christmas with his boy. I sat with the kid, reading stories and talking about school. The father convinced Tony he wanted one more minute with the boy. Released from Tony's grip, the guy briefly hugged his son—then lit up his last cigarette, which was what he really wanted all along.

A quick survey of my caseload reveals that about 85 percent of my current cases are drug related. The crimes range from burglary to assault to credit card fraud. One victim had her house ransacked, and within days her checks began showing up at stores throughout the county. She starting getting notices from check-clearing companies all over the country. The paperwork drove her crazy, not to mention ruining her credit.

Check forging is big business in the drug economy. Stolen blank checks are sold or traded for drugs with dealers, who then either resell them or send out their street whores to write them at stores. Many stores just swipe the check and let the purchase go through without checking ID.

A while back we had a series of purse snatchings done by a white male and his two white female crackhead prostitutes. They targeted elderly women, knocking them down then taking their purses. Before we had even finished writing up a crime report the young women would be at a grocery store or a large discount store passing their checks.

In addition to the crimes committed by drug users to obtain money for drugs, sometimes drugs themselves simply cause crime. More than four times as many murders are committed *under the influence* of drugs as are committed to get money to *buy* drugs, according to federal and state data. Many needless lesser offenses are committed by people while in a drugged condition.

I have arrested countless people, mostly teens, who have broken into homes, been involved in brawls, assaulted females, stolen cars, and committed similar offenses, only to hear the excuse that "I was so stoned/blasted/high I don't remember much of what happened." Many of the people I arrest say that if they weren't on drugs they would never have done what they did. And I believe them.

I asked one of our lieutenants and one of our narcotics officers, "Of all the crimes you see, how many would you guess involve drugs, excluding alcohol?" The narc officer thought about 75 percent, the lieutenant, around 60. In my case, I would say about seven out of ten. One example is a heavy-duty doper I have known for years who tried to get his ex-girlfriend to have sex with another girl one drunken, drugged-up night. She refused and tried to leave. He followed her outside and hit her in the head with a two by four. He forced the other girl to grope the victim, then rammed his fist up the victim's anal cavity. He took her unconscious body and dumped it on a canal bank in a pile of ants and then tried to cover the crime by burning the victim's car. The flames from the car saved the young girl's life; the fire department responded and found her.

So when people ask if drugs cause crime, the answer is a resounding yes. A couple of months ago, a local juvenile doper robbed a drug dealer's girlfriend (she is also a drug dealer). He wanted money and drugs so he could get away from an upcoming juvenile detention stint. As a result of the robbery, the girl and three other goons came into our city and attacked an acquaintance of the robber—a young man who is a peaceful, hippie-style drug user whose biggest thrill is following a particular rock band around. He was beaten, kidnapped, and taken to

*Florida police detective Ray Wisher is a* TAE *contributing writer.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> There is a saying around here, "Not all thieves are dopers but all dopers are thieves."

another home where the four criminals kicked in the door looking for the offending juvenile doper. Eventually, they found him, and when they did they shot him in the chest twice. To tally the events, we suffered over a three-day period one robbery, two batteries, one aggravated battery, one home invasion, one kidnapping, and one attempted murder—all over drugs.

Yet the biggest threat is not the hardened criminal drug abuser. The biggest threat today is the drugs themselves and what they do to young people. "Drugs today are so much more potent than before it's scary," notes our narcotics sergeant. Heroin, Ecstasy, marijuana, cocaine, crystal meth, pills of all descriptions—all these drugs are far more dangerous than before. Just recently a version of Ecstasy has come out with heroin added to the original chemical concoction. It won't be long before that begins to run up a death toll, given how popular Ecstasy is with high schoolers today.

Crackheads are often so hooked that when they see a cop coming they won't even run but just start puffing hard on the pipe to get every last bit they can. Crystal meth, a fairly new drug not yet common in Southwest Florida (but on the march), has the opposite effect. It hops up users so much it could force a good Rambo imitation out of Woody Allen. Meth users get so agitated they frequently chew holes through their own cheeks.

Teens who get hooked on drugs like Xanax or Ecstasy often smoke marijuana heavily as well, and thus begin a slide into self-destruction that often takes their families and friends with them. I have seen white middle-class girls and boys as young as 12 stoned out of their minds on pot or zannies (a narcotics officer pal sees them as young as ten). I've worked case upon case where the mother and father will beg us for some kind of answer to their kid's out-of-control behavior. The sad fact is we don't have an answer.

Drugs have become such an accepted part of our society that using them has lost much of its stigma. And if you don't believe me, look at www.ecstasy.org and its glowing testimonials of father and daughter tripping together, its recommendations for how best to indulge in Ecstasy during pregnancy, and so forth.

One of my biggest challenges is convincing middle-class parents that there is a problem. Usually the kid's behavior is so obvious the whole affair is a matter of parents' being unwilling to acknowledge the white elephant sitting in their living room. Sometimes parents who are normally law-abiding end up obstructing cops like me—lying to us, concealing stolen property, and worse—to protect their drug-using children.

That only makes things worse. Once they're in the drug culture, most of these kids will start to commit crimes that range from the silly to the devastating. Kids who like to get high but are afraid to steal will suddenly discover that they're helping their druggie friends transport stolen goods. They increasingly find themselves connected to lying and scams, weapons-carrying, and violence. Often teens start dealing drugs just to support their own habits. The cold hard truth is, if drugs were not tolerated, the vast majority of the crimes would never occur.

Despite horror stories told by the drug legalization lobby which claim "harmless casual drug users are being locked up by the thousands for trying a single joint," the unfortunate reality is that unless you are some kind of drug trafficker, the chance of spending significant time in jail for drug use today is tiny. In Florida, a state with relatively stern anti-drug laws, you're basically safe unless we catch you with 25 pounds of marijuana. And if we catch with 24 pounds and 15 ounces, there's still a good chance you can avoid prison because of sentencing guidelines and statutes. You can walk around with dozens of Ecstasy pills in your pocket and flaunt the same feeling of safety. As a narcotics officer here says, "You'll go to jail a lot faster for fighting with your wife, or driving after three beers, or commiting a crime as a cop, than you will for dealing or shooting up drugs."

Nationwide, seven out of ten drug offenders who have no prior record avoid *any* prison sentence. This includes major traffickers. If you look only at those arrested for drug *possession*, figures from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics show that the vast majority avoid prison *even if they have previous convictions.*

Unless and until our society becomes much more hardnosed against drugs—a possibility which seems remote, especially when the generation now in power are veterans of the anything-goes 1960s—there will continue to be hordes of damaged human beings passing through our homes, workplaces, communities, and courtrooms.

## Drugs and Crime

### The Data

- **A 1997 study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that in 92 percent of the domestic violence cases investigated, the assailants had used alcohol or drugs on the day of the assault. Fully 72 percent of the attackers had a previous arrest for substance abuse.**
- **Half of the criminals aged 15-20 arrested in 23 major cities were on marijuana at the time they were picked up. The average age of first use of marijuana, nationwide, is now about 13 ½.**
- **Among all prison inmates, 80 percent have used drugs. Fully 30 percent were on drugs when they committed their crime.**
- **50 percent of callers to a national cocaine hotline reported that they had committed acts of violence while on the drug. Studies in New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., have found that the large majority of child abuse cases involved a parent using cocaine.**

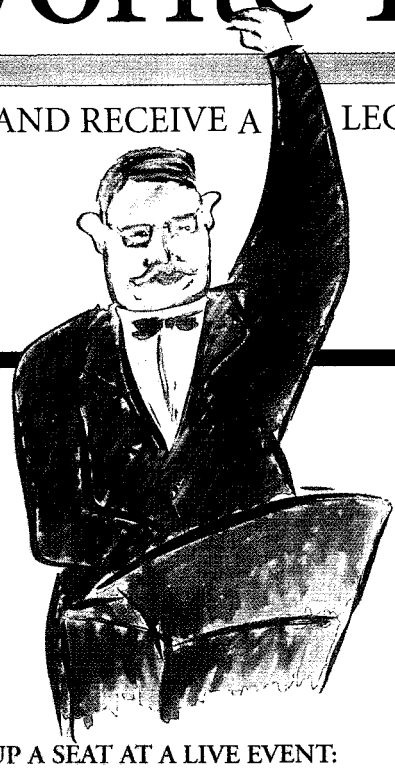


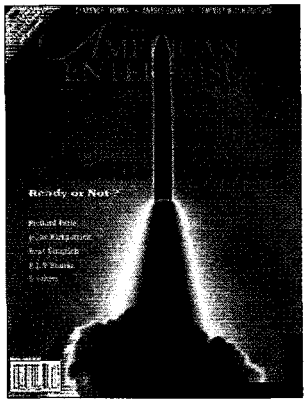
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Get A Free Tape of Your Favorite Thinker

SUBSCRIBE OR RENEW NOW AND RECEIVE A LECTURE OF YOUR CHOICE!

TAPES MAKE GREAT Gifts!






**Start a one-year subscription to *The American Enterprise,*** or extend your existing subscription (in either case at our standard one-year price of $28), and **we'll send you the tape of your choice at no extra charge.**

Fill in your subscriber's information. Then mark the free tape you'd like, and we'll send it at the same time we process your subscription order.

**PULL UP A SEAT AT A LIVE EVENT:**

- ☐ Vice President and Mrs. Cheney—"Live" with *The American Enterprise*
- ☐ Jesse Helms—lecture "Towards A Compassionate Conservative Foreign Policy"
- ☐ Michael Barone—lecture, "Ethnicity in America, 1900 and 2000"
- ☐ Newt Gingrich—lecture, "Reflections of a private citizen"
- ☐ Michael Medved vs. David Horowitz—"TV: Pro & Con"
- ☐ Dinesh D'Souza—lecture on racism
- ☐ Irving Kristol—informal talk, "Thinking about religion"
- ☐ Christina Hoff Sommers—"The social status of boys vs. girls"
- ☐ Thomas Sowell—lecture, "The Quest for Cosmic Justice"
- ☐ Charles Murray—informal talk, "What it means to be a libertarian"
- ☐ John O'Sullivan—lecture on conservatism's future
- ☐ Paul Johnson—lecture, "Can the media make a moral contribution?"
- ☐ Mary Leftcowitz—lecture, "Afrocentric fairy tales"
- ☐ John Dilulio—lecture, "How street crime is changing our democracy"
- ☐ Allan Bloom—lecture on the novel *Madame Bovary*
- ☐ George Will—lecture, "The problem with populism"
- ☐ John Lott—lecture on "More Guns, Less Crime"
- ☐ Lynne Cheney—lecture on political correctness today
- ☐ Michael Medved—lecture on the problem with Hollywood
- ☐ P.J. O'Rourke and Robert Bork—"Live" with *The American Enterprise*
- ☐ An informal debate on libertarianism (with Charles Murray, Robert Bork, Irving Kristol, Michael Novak, and James Glassman)

Mail this ad to:
*The American Enterprise,*
[illegible] Street NW, Washington, [illegible] 20036
FAX: 202-862[illegible]

☐ Please start my one-year subscription to *The American Enterprise.*
(AFAJ01)

☐ Please extend my current subscription by one year.
(EFAJ01)

Name.....

Address.....

.....

City.....

State/Zip.....

☐ check for $28 (made out to *The American Enterprise*) enclosed.

☐ bill my VISA/MC/AMEX

card #.....

expires.....

sig.....

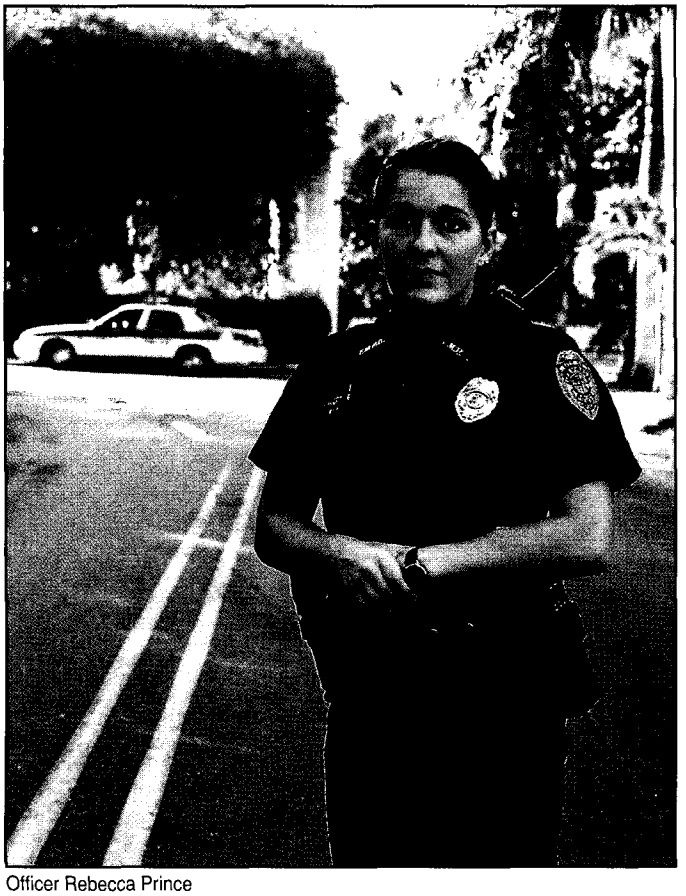
THE AMERICAN ENTERPRISE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# On Patrol

The tough job of police officer gets more complicated every day

*By Eli Lehrer*



PBS Studio/Sam Johnson

Officer Rebecca Prince

Bored after writing a few traffic tickets, throwing a foul-mouthed malingerer out of a hospital, and grabbing a bite to eat, Fort Myers patrol officer Rebecca Prince heads toward "the crack McDonald's." That's what she calls a run-down heap of leaky garden apartments on Bramen Avenue, just off a commercial corridor cluttered with gas stations, rent-to-own furniture stores, and taco stands. Even on a January night just a few degrees above freezing, it takes Prince only five minutes to find a wrongdoer.

On a side street, Christine Bosewell, a prostitute whom Prince has arrested "20 or 30 times, minimum" makes an appearance. Bosewell, a computer check confirms, has a thick pile of warrants—enough for an arrest—for failing to pay the loitering tickets Prince writes. Prince calls another officer for backup and searches Bosewell thoroughly. She finds a crack pipe in Bosewell's bra, a can of mace in her pocket, and a knife in her purse. Prince smashes the pipe and tosses the knife down a sewer, then handcuffs Bosewell and takes her back to the city's police station for booking and lockup.

As the crackling police radio grows silent around 9 p.m., Prince answers a false burglar alarm, yells at a gas station owner who lets drug dealing go on in his parking lot, and takes time to chat with a storekeeper grown weary of his neighborhood addicts.

Around 11, Prince stops a dented maroon Cadillac running a red light. A cloud of marijuana smoke strong enough to make a visitor dizzy hits Prince's face as soon as she opens the door. The smoke provides probable cause for a search. Prince calls for other officers, and four more cruisers soon appear. The search turns up a bag of cocaine, some crack, and a package of marijuana. The



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

drug-using driver goes back to the station.

The evening didn't include the violence or physical danger that cops on TV face nearly every episode. Indeed, because of the unusual cold the night brought less action than typical. But for a good cop like Prince it was a fairly normal turn at the office. And thanks to her efforts, the neighborhood immediately became a little less ugly and dangerous.

Last year marked the ninth consecutive year of declining crime in America, though the drop was the smallest since rates started falling, and in the South crime actually rose. Still, the last decade represents the longest sustained period of crime reduction since our nation started keeping systematic statistics in 1934. Increased imprisonment, successful campaigns against drug use, favorable demographic trends, improvements in urban design, a revival of civil society in some inner cities, the peaking of underclass illegitimacy, and the end of cash-entitlement welfare have all helped to reduce crime. But great strides in the way police operate have also helped.

With an eye toward documenting crime fighting today, *TAE* recently researched the twin cities of Fort Myers and Cape Coral, Florida. Located on opposite sides of the Caloosahatchee River in southwestern Florida, Fort Myers and Cape Coral reveal how American crime is evolving, and how police are responding.

Fort Myers is a fairly typical U.S. city—centralized around a downtown, racially diverse, a bit stressed and chaotic, but fairly prosperous. The town's population of around 48,000 is about 30 percent black and 8 percent Latino, with whites (many of them retirees) making up the balance. Around 15 percent of residents live in poverty.

Florida has the highest crime rate of any American state—about twice the national average. While crime fell in the state during the 1990s, Florida still has a long way to go. Several of its cities rank among America's most dangerous.

Fort Myers in particular is an extremely high-crime area by national standards. In 2000, it experienced 125 serious reported crimes per 1,000 residents. That makes it around three times more dangerous than New York City, about twice as dangerous as Chicago, about the same as St. Louis, the most crime ridden large city (over 100,000 population) in the country. Fort Myers' crime rates are about four times the national average.

Like some other southern cities, Fort Myers de-incorporated certain black areas during the 1950s in order to keep newly enfranchised African Americans out of city politics. The unincorporated areas—poor and crime-ridden—resemble numerous little islands floating deep inside city boundaries. They present headaches for the police, because city officers cannot make arrests or conduct investigations in the unincorporated neighborhoods without calling in the Lee County Sheriff. Criminals know this and sometimes conduct their business on the jurisdictional boundaries, fleeing one way if a city cruiser pulls up, and another way if it's a sheriff's car.

Cape Coral is entirely different. It began one day in 1957 when Jack and Leonard Rosen—Baltimore cosmetics manufacturers turned hardball swampland salesmen—staked out a Florida field of dreams. Within ten years a community of 50,000 people grew up; the 100,000th resident moved in last year. Though in population it is now a bigger "city" than neighboring Fort Myers, Cape Coral remains mostly a sprawling bedroom community, with some commercial strip malls strung along the main highways—a classic suburbanized sunbelt creation, full of transplants and retirees occupying low-slung single-family houses that front a grid of numbered streets and canals. The city has little poverty. About 95 percent of residents are white, though an increasing number of blacks have purchased homes in recent years to escape Fort Myers' urban ills. There are no terrible neighborhoods, and the "bad" parts of town consist of short stretches of cheesy tract homes with unkempt lawns and trash in the yards.

Yet, like most of Florida, Cape Coral has more crime than comparable communities in other parts of America. It reported 37 serious crimes per 1,000 residents in 2000 (compared to Fort Myers' 125). That puts Cape Coral just about at the national average—which is high for a low-poverty bedroom community. And while crime rates fell a bit last year in Fort Myers, they rose in Cape Coral.

Cape Coral and Fort Myers both have professional police departments with dynamic, well-respected chiefs at the top. Fort Myers Chief Larry Hart is known nationally for urging the use of big-city community policing strategies in mid-sized cities. Cape Coral Chief Arnold Gibbs takes great pride in his department's certification from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. Neither department, however, does anything truly extraordinary. Each has about 160 sworn officers authorized to use weapons and make arrests.

Police work is a helping profession that sometimes involves the use of violence. Police arrest murderers, hunt down missing children, stop unsafe motorists, settle quarrels between neighbors, collar shoplifters, and scatter unruly crowds. They do these things better than other citizens because they are authorized to apply force if necessary. Police must walk a fine line between being gentle enough to inspire trust and confidence while being sturdy enough to deter crime by force if pushed into that. The police thus have a nearly impossible task: They must use fear to mitigate fear.

The latest and most promising attempt to manage this difficult assignment is something called "community policing," which aims to prevent crime by working with the community to keep order. As the twentieth century unfolded, the need for courtesy, pre-emptive problem-solving, and community partnerships tended to get lost in other police priorities. Responding quickly to emergency calls became the chief goal, and so rapid mobility in cars, new technologies, reactive investigations, and paramilitary command structures were emphasized.

Today, police departments again emphasize human skills, for even the most routine police activities can demand a good deal of interpersonal deftness. At 7:30 on a quiet Thursday night, Cape Coral patrol officer Steve Petrovich responds to a radio call about a car accident. A gray-haired man in a sweatshirt has crinkled the sheet metal of his Oldsmobile by pulling in front of a pickup truck. A Taurus, trying to avoid the pile up, has run off the road. Petrovich helps a colleague administer a series of field sobriety tests.

The Oldsmobile driver, obviously inebriated, goes through a

TAE *contributing writer Eli Lehrer, visiting fellow at the Heritage Foundation, has observed at roughly 40 different law enforcement agencies while writing a book on policing.*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> Policing has become a very complex helping profession, as tricky and demanding as teaching or nursing.

long series of kindergarten-like exercises. Asked to count backwards from 76, he recites, "76, 78, 73, 72, 75." He misses several times when asked to touch his finger to his nose. "Those tests must look pretty silly," remarks Petrovich. "But if we don't do them, we don't get the people, or we don't make good arrests. It's that simple." As he is being handcuffed, the man quietly admits to drunk driving.

While the procedures of DWI stops can be taught fairly easily, a failure to follow them can cause enormous problems and some aspects of patrol work require far more discretion. Later that evening, Petrovich is called to a subdivided ranch house on a barren lot. A woman and her live-in boyfriend have gotten into a serious fight over his failure to accompany their daughter to receive an award at school. Their well-furnished but messy home, littered with fast food packages, empty beer cans, and Harlequin romances, smells heavily of alcohol. The woman seems drunker than her boyfriend. Petrovich and another officer who assists refer to everyone as "sir" and "ma'am," and are consistently respectful to the intoxicated couple.

The man and woman tell contradictory stories: She complains he sexually propositioned a neighbor, while he says she hit him in a rage. The officers' professional attitude calms the angry couple and wins the trust of their dark-haired, dark-eyed daughter. Standing a few feet away from her parents in the kitchen, the daughter quickly warms to Petrovich. He questions her gently, sounding more like a teacher than a cop as he gracefully mixes concern and sternness.

The 12-year-old tells Petrovich that her mother, drunk as usual, started the argument, although not the physical violence. Her father, whom she thinks has a criminal record, hits her mother a lot. After talking also with some neighbors, who frequently hear the couple arguing but aren't sure who threw the first punch this time, Petrovich hauls the man off to the police station. "It's often impossible to tell what happened for sure, but you always have to try to make a solid decision," he explains. "I just believed the girl. She's pretty mature." Petrovich's procedures show a good command of police ethics: He starts without any assumption of guilt or innocence, treats people with respect, and shows special deference toward children.

Many times, the most important part of police work is just to be quick. Around 6:30 one evening Fort Myers patrol officer Joseph Schwartz is called to an area behind a notoriously troublesome liquor store where men and women congregate to drink malt liquor. A fight has just occurred as our cruiser pulls up, in a lot littered with 40-ounce malt liquor bottles and cans. Two women eye each other threateningly. An older man lies on the ground twitching, obviously drunk or on drugs. Nobody in the crowd welcomes Schwartz's presence, and dark stares greet him. The crowd claims the man lying on the ground "hit his head on the sign." Schwartz orders people to clear out. By showing the colors, he scatters the crowd and avoids a situation that could have turned ugly fast.

Even in a high-crime city like Fort Myers, officers often go an entire night without making an arrest. Their activities to prevent crime *before* it happens, and to collect problem-solving information about crimes that have taken place earlier, can be just as valuable as a collar, though. Police officers have a tremendous amount of latitude in many aspects of their work, and, in trying to squelch crime before and after the fact, professional training can take an officer only so far. The best ones have strong instincts for fixing problems.

Like other proactive cops, Rebecca Prince uses her powers of observation to fight crime. By paying careful attention to little infractions, she often uncovers big ones. The night after Prince arrested Christine Bosewell and the drug-using Cadillac driver, Fort Myers' police headquarters buzzes with news of a two-man burglary ring that broke into nearly 20 homes and businesses over New Year's weekend. During his roll call briefing, Scott Cain, Prince's watch supervisor, asks officers to look out for two African-American men, one taller than average and the other perhaps 6'7".

Thanks to the freakish cold, things remain slow for Prince on that night's patrol. Once again she cruises the area near the crack McDonald's. Soon she comes upon a hard-looking bleached-blonde woman with sun-leathered skin and missing teeth, clearly intoxicated or on drugs. Prince, who often works this area as a hooker decoy in undercover stings, knows her well, and reports she has a closetful of previous citations for prostitution. Unlike Bosewell, who was resigned to spending an evening in jail, this woman badly wants to stay out of lockup. Prince proves willing to deal. "What can you give me?" she asks, shuffling the prostitute into her patrol car. Prince listens to stories about drug dealing at well-known locations. "Give me something better!" she demands.

Finally, the hooker comes up with some street information Prince can use: a story of two men, one tall and one very tall, who are running a burglary ring out of a white house at the end of a cul de sac. The house backs up onto a wooded strip separating it from a parking lot on the other side. According to Prince's informant, the men unload their booty in the parking lot and use a shopping cart to transport it to the house. Thinking she's hit pay dirt, Prince gives the prostitute a lift to a sleazy bar (even promising to bring her back home at the end of the night), and heads for the dead-end street.

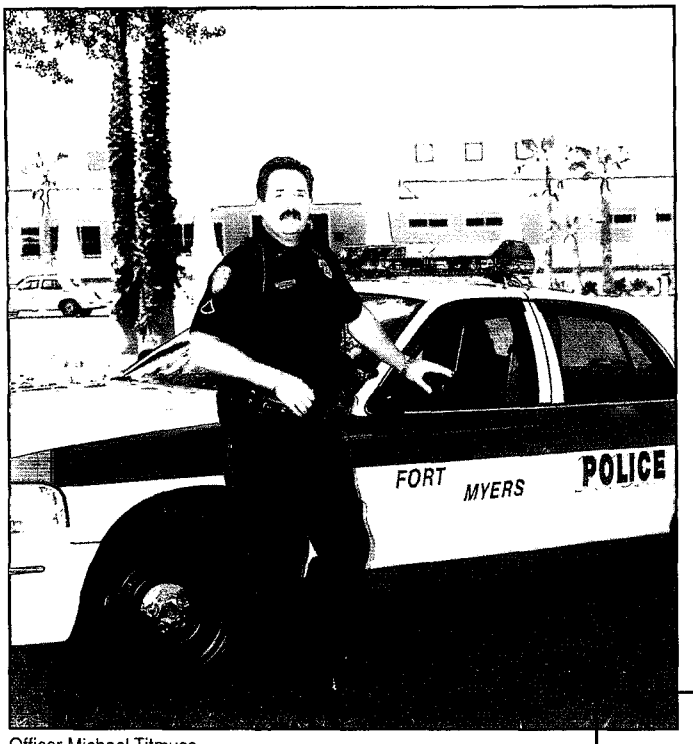
The house comes into view just as Prince's informant described it: a low-lying white residence with a junky yard, backing perfectly up against a strip of no-man's land that leads to the parking lot on the commercial strip. The driveway is empty late at night. But lights burn inside, and the bed sheets which hang over the windows ripple when Prince shines her patrol car's spotlight on the home's exterior.

Calling for backup, Prince decides to investigate. Another officer comes to wait in the street and Prince walks up to the door. When two young women answer the door, Prince launches into a convincing patter about a complaint from neighbors about a loud stereo. The women, who say they're "baby-sitting for a friend" stand firmly in the doorway, blush and fidget as Prince talks with them and looks over their shoulders. There's no noise from a stereo, yet the women apologize anyway. But they stand blocking her entrance to the house.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PBS Studio/Sam Johnson



Officer Michael Titmuss

Convinced something suspicious is afoot, and hoping her imaginative approach may have broken a bothersome case, Prince calls her supervisor. He has an officer posted on the roof of a nearby building to lie in wait for the burglars to return and start unloading their loot. He also offers a gentle reprimand to Prince: Without knowing it, she had strayed into one of the islands of real estate in the middle of the city that is supposed to be under the sheriff's jurisdiction, not her department's.

In many quiet neighborhoods and towns across America, good policing may just mean carefully training officers, avoiding corruption, and showing up quickly when people call. But police need more creative strategies in areas with high levels of transience or neighborhood decay, areas experiencing cultural clashes between ethnic groups, places poisoned by replacement of the work ethic with a welfare culture, neighborhoods with weak community standards, or streets infested with gangs or drug dealing. In particular, police have learned they need to partner with the community to stop crime *before* it happens.

This is an important principle behind "community policing," which nearly every police department in the country now claims to practice. It involves getting to know local residents; searching for long-term solutions to problems like vagrancy, derelict housing, and unsupervised juveniles; and eventually, teaching neighborhoods to police themselves.

Michael Titmuss is a former restaurant and nightclub owner who decided he wanted to help people, became a cop, and eventually a Fort Myers Community Policing Coordinator. Titmuss epitomizes the new type of officer who fixes local problems that breed crime, rather than simply responding to emergency calls on the radio. While he has the same rank and about the same pay as a patrol officer, Titmuss has a far different way of working. He focuses on making allies among local residents and businesspeople, finding the sources of neighborhood crime spikes, and then formulating solutions.

Titmuss begins by keeping in close touch with the four-square-mile area he's assigned to police. The counterman in a deli greets him by name. When he passes a notorious problem property, he explains chapter and verse the owner's habit of trading sex for rent. Driving through a motel that once provided "offices" for many of the area's prostitutes but now features gurgling fountains, a bronze sculpture of dolphins, and a German-speaking staff catering to tourists, Titmuss launches into a five-minute discourse about an angel developer who has remade many of the worst areas on this beat.

Titmuss doesn't spend all his time on community relations. When a puff of smoke materializes behind railroad tracks, he speeds off to investigate. The fire department takes care of the fire but Titmuss radios in a report on some suspicious-looking youths nearby. "Ultimately, I've got to work with the patrol force," Titmuss says. "If I go to a block-watch meeting and people feel that the police won't do anything, then I can run all the youth programs in the world and it won't make a difference. I've got to know everything a patrol officer does and more."

They must find crime before it finds them.

This philosophy has helped Titmuss mobilize a series of revitalization task forces in his neighborhood. He has spearheaded mass trash pick-ups, set up new programs for children, and gotten abandoned buildings harboring vagrants knocked down. He has spent hundreds of hours compiling lists of the owners and managers of problem properties in the area, many of them out-of-towners. He is currently working to convert a long-closed bowling alley in a commercially critical shopping center into a center for area youth. Inside the mildewed structure he sketches his vision of a police- and city-run activity center with a snack bar, homework rooms, and boxing rings. And with his long background in successful nightclub operations, Titmuss's plans are practical and hard-nosed, not pipe dreams. Describing the uses of high ceilings, he explains "I always liked to use bowling alleys for clubs: lots of floor space with no internal supports."

His approach draws raves from community leaders. "It's a professional effort that does what we need them to," says Tony Corsentino, a former diner owner who heads the Palm Beach Boulevard Development Corporation near Titmuss's home base. "I didn't believe it would work out, but when we got a police officer who could coordinate all the city agencies we really did something about crime. The neighborhood is a lot cleaner and a lot safer." Even ordinary citizens notice the local police seem a little more helpful. "I've had problems with the cops in the past," one woman told *TAE*. "But when I call them, they listen."

Titmuss argues that this method of policing creates long-term crime solutions. "I can sometimes arrest someone and they're out on the street the next day. That isn't very efficient. Or I can work with property owners to get him evicted. That solves the problem for that one guy pretty much permanently." In a typical afternoon, Titmuss might spend an hour or so on paperwork, a few more

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Titmuss epitomizes the new type of officer who fixes local problems that breed crime, rather than simply responding to emergency calls on the radio.

working with area kids, a few minutes chatting with local business owners and landlords, and an hour or two helping some patrol officers plan a raid on a gas station where drug sales have surged. He'll also find time to back up his colleagues on a few calls, take four or five radio calls himself, and maybe even collar a vandal.

Most patrol officers seem to respect the community cops. Some have doubts, however. "A lot of them slack off," complained one patrol officer. "They don't *need* to do anything; so unless they're naturally energetic, they aren't *going* to do anything." Working against this skepticism, both Fort Myers and Cape Coral are now trying to make community policing a department-wide philosophy, not just the work of a few specialized officers.

If these efforts succeed, the benefits could extend to officers as well as the city. Titmuss says he finds his job satisfying on many levels. "I can go home every day knowing I've made a positive difference in somebody's life. You work patrol long enough, and you swear there's not a decent human being on the face of this earth," he sighs. "But I can do this job and be convinced people are basically good."

Many traditional patrol officers admit they know only a handful of people on their beats, most of them bad guys. This is particularly a problem in the anonymous residential suburbia of Cape Coral. Despite the generally excellent relations between residents and the police in Cape Coral, officers *TAE* spoke with struggled to come up with the name of even one citizen in the large swath of tract homes they patrolled each evening.

Poor architecture and city design can do that. The atomized, sidewalk-less world of Cape Coral tends to make casual contact difficult or impossible. Though residential Cape Coral has more neighborhood watches than Fort Myers, its sterile civic grid makes neighborliness difficult. "All over the city we identify neighborhood watches by the chair's home address, because the neighborhoods don't have names," explains Brad Johnson, president of Cape Coral's citywide neighborhood watch federation.

Of course, police-community partnerships can only go so far in preventing crime. When miscreants go on the prowl, the police will still need to respond to protect the population. Finding and eliminating such crimes can be done through conventional sting operations and busts, or through more creative "problem solving" approaches.

Problem-solving policing aims not just to solve individual crimes, but to eliminate conditions that underlie lawbreaking. The focus is not on massive social forces like poverty and racism, which would be fruitless for police to try to battle. Rather, problem-solving police teams attempt to fix localized problems of disorder, decay, idleness, and inadequate oversight. Usually this begins with insights gathered through simple patrol work.

On a quiet Fort Myers side street between an apartment complex and a park lies a small wooden house that has become a hangout for prostitutes. The local community policing coordinator has discovered that the resident owner is a retired New York City cop who is providing a haven in return for sexual favors and drugs. Local officers are keeping a close eye on the place.

When a crowd of cars outside the house attracts her attention during one evening patrol, Rebecca Prince decides to knock on the door and see what happens. The retired cop comes to the door in his bathrobe, trim and courteous. She asks to come in. He isn't obligated to let her, but does anyway. Inside, a surreal scene greets the visitors: Perhaps eight woman lie around the house, some of them in strange postures. The rooms are spic and span, but almost devoid of furniture. A couple snuggles under a blanket. Prince strolls around, politely but firmly giving the owner a piece of her mind. "You see those girls over there...they have AIDS!" she exclaims. "I know them to be prostitutes. Are you aware of that?" The man protests that the hookers are simply friends whom he rents rooms to. She berates him for a few more minutes for allowing his house to become a serious neighborhood nuisance, then leaves.

Prince knows that any girl she locked up that night for some minor drug or sex offense would likely return to the house within a few days. Frustrated, she brainstorms for a solution. Soon she radios an older, highly experienced officer, fiftyish, with a bit of a beer belly. Meeting him outside a dark building where he was making a burglary check, Prince explains the situation in her neighborhood, says she wants the owner out, and picks her colleague's brain for advice.

After kicking around some complex nuisance-abatement laws, Prince mentions that the proprietor of the cat house said he is renting rooms. The older officer lights up. "You can get him for that," he says. "If he's running a boarding house without a license you can close the place down this week. It ain't a prostitution or drug conviction, but it'll make the problem go away." Her eyes shining, Prince makes a note to start the paperwork the next day with city housing officials.

The new methods of policing ask a lot of officers. They must be less detached, and much more personally involved with individuals. They must find crime before it finds them. They must work in tandem with many other arms of government, as well as with private businesses and civic organizations. At times it can be like wrestling with jello.

Policing has become a very complex helping profession. It may not match the sophistication of heart surgery, but in its current day-to-day practice, policing is easily as tricky and demanding as teaching or nursing.

But if the police are to become more effective, there is probably no alternative. They must help strengthen the bonds that hold American society together. Healthy civilizations depend on people controlling those impulses that bring them momentary pleasure at the expense of the community's good. The police need to step in when that fails, sometimes with force. But the best cops today use their leverage to help communities heal themselves.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Introducing a New Journal of Statesmanship and Political Thought.

The *Claremont Review of Books* is the new flagship publication of the Claremont Institute for the Study of Statesmanship and Political Philosophy. The *Claremont Review of Books* seeks to restore the principles of the American founding to their rightful, preeminent place in our national life.

Why a book review? Because it is a format that conservatives have not exploited, and we think that conservatives need, persistently and farsightedly, to wage the battle of ideas at the level of ideas rather than merely at the level of particular policies, important as these are. The galaxy of conservative journals and think-tanks will continue to shine brightly, of course, illuminating ideas as well as issues. But every month important conservative books and arguments languish, liberal tomes escape censure, and intelligent works of biography, history, politics, and literature remain unexamined. We aim to change that.

At the same time, we intend in each issue to reflect on current contentions and help reawaken in American politics, and especially in American conservatism, a forthright devotion to the Constitution and the principles of our political tradition. We believe this essential if conservatism is to understand its own majestic purposes, as well as to become a more effective political force.

In just the first two issues, the *Claremont Review of Books* has debunked critics of Lincoln, analyzed the 2000 presidential election, reviewed the latest books on foreign policy and defense, picked apart the latest theories in favor of restitution for slavery, assessed and reassessed the legacies of Bill Clinton, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and Henry "Scoop" Jackson, and provided the recipe for the perfect martini.

The third issue, published on Memorial Day 2001, features essays by John Marini on heroism and philosophy in the Western, John Meroney on Reagan in Hollywood, Peter Augustine Lawler in search of virtue among the Bourgeois Bohemians, and Harry V. Jaffa on the Middle East. Also, Michael Uhlmann examines the legacy of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., James Higgins follows Thomas Sowell's *Personal Journey*, Mackubin Owens searches Victor Davis Hanson's *Soul of Battle*, Martha Derthick answers David Kessler's *A Question of Intent*, and much more. Subscribe Today.

**Please subscribe me to the Claremont Review of Books for (check one):**

❑ One year (four issues @ $19.95) special rate: $14.95

❑ Two years (eight issues @ $34.95) special rate: $29.95

❑ Three years (12 issues @ $54.95) special rate: $49.95

❑ My check is enclosed

❑ Please charge my: ❑ Visa ❑ Mastercard

Card number_____ Expiration_____

Signature_____ Phone_____

Name_____

Address_____

City_____

State_____ ZIP_____

**Mail to: The Claremont Institute, 250 W. First Street, Suite 330, Claremont, CA 91711**
**Order online at subscriptions@claremont.org. Or fax order to (909) 626-8724.**
**For more information call (909) 621-6825.**

## www.claremont.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Sad Reality

## Truths about prisons

*By Blake Hurst*

Estelle "Sissy" Arwood doesn't look like a murderer. She's short, overweight, with a fair complexion, too much make-up, a new "perm" she's proud of, and subscriptions to both *Glamour* and *Cosmopolitan*.

At 16, Sissy was having problems at home. Her stepmother hated her 14-year-old boyfriend. Sissy missed her mother, who died when she was nine, and she had never forgiven her father for re-marrying. She and her boyfriend, along with his cousin (who was another boyfriend, according to Sissy), decided to solve their domestic squabble in high Miami fashion. As Sissy describes it: "My boyfriend and I were involved in an interracial relationship, and my stepmother would not accept it. So I killed her. *I* didn't do the crime, my boyfriend did."

On her last day of freedom, in 1986, Sissy unlocked a window at 4 a.m., after her father had left for work, and let her co-conspirators into the house. One hid under a bed, and one in a closet. Sissy then left for school. The two boys confronted her stepmother and strangled her.

What Sissy's account of the crime neglects to mention is that she and her two boyfriends also planned to kill her father, who had recently won $250,000 from a Las Vegas slot machine. The double murder was foiled because her stepmother was able to reach the phone and dial 911 before her attackers overpowered her. The 911 operator ended up talking with a male voice telling her to cancel the call.

Sissy is likeable and talkative, with a childlike manner. She is sorry for what she has done, proud of the classes she has taken in prison,(she's a certified optician), and looks forward to receiving her GED. She attends chapel and Narcotics Anonymous regularly, and hopes to be reunited with her boyfriend and her stepsisters when she leaves prison. She's reconciled with her father, and he visits often. She even wants to have a family.

This sort of personal change for the better is the grandest achievement a prison can hope to encourage. But it is elusive. Even prisoners who turn their lives around while in lock-up often revert to old bad habits once released into the less orderly real world.

What are the factors leading people into the kinds of behavior that land them behind bars? In *TAE*'s detailed interviews with prisoners in four different Florida state prisons, two constants emerged: Family problems and drugs. Sissy grew up in a "blended" family. She started "smokin' reefer"

Eyewire



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at ten, and snorting cocaine at 11. These elements of her story are common ones.

The damage done by decayed home life and drug use is obvious even to the more perceptive inmates. D. Adam Lafleur, a prisoner at Moore Haven Correctional Institution, is serving a sentence for buying a kilo of cocaine from an undercover police officer, the latest in a series of convictions that have kept him in jail most of the last decade. But when he talks about his fellow prisoners, Lafleur sounds like William Bennett.

"A prisoner standing in line with me said he wanted to have sex with his girlfriend on the next visiting day, so she would have a baby. I said that I wouldn't do that until I was out of prison. He asked why, and I turned to a group of other prisoners and asked them about their fathers. Not one had a father in the home growing up."

Lafleur, however, has taken a more violent approach to solving society's problems than Mr. Bennett. "When I was doing armed robbery, I justified it by only robbing drug-dealers—people who were doing wrong." Highly intelligent and articulate, Mr. Lafleur is lacking only a sense of irony.

In recent years, the incarceration of drug criminals has become a pet complaint of liberals and civil rights groups. They claim our prisons are packed with drug-possession-only offenders who are little threat to society. *New York Times* editorialists say we are locking people up unnecessarily. Lamenting the increase in incarceration from nearly 800,000 in 1990 to about 1,900,000 today (prisons and local jails combined), The Sentencing Project, a left-wing advocacy group, recommends abolishing prison sentences for drug users.

By mid-1999, about a quarter of the people in state prisons were there for drug offenses, and over half of federal inmates were drug criminals. Of course, the statistics which currently show Lafleur as a drug-only offender ignore his previous convictions for armed robbery and kidnapping. And Lafleur is no exception; drug offenders in prison almost always have previous crimes on their records. According to Eladio Paez, a Miami detective specializing in narcotics, it is almost impossible to go to prison simply for possessing or using drugs. Bob Peterson, a former prosecutor and drug czar for the state of Michigan, agrees: "You have to really work to get into jail." According to Peterson, most inmates now serving only a drug charge received that sentence as a result of plea bargaining down other more serious offenses, because the drug violation is the easiest to prove.

Statistics back this up. In the latest year, only 8.5 percent of prison admissions in Florida were for possession of drugs, and most of those inmates either had prior convictions or were "possessing" a very large volume of dope. A national survey of state prisons tells the same story. Fully 93 percent of the people in state prisons were either violent or repeat offenders. Less than 2 percent of state prisoners were serving time for marijuana crimes, and most of them were large-scale traffickers. The average marijuana trafficker in federal prison was arrested with 3.5 tons of "weed," the average cocaine trafficker with 180 pounds.

Of the prisoners *TAE* interviewed, five were in prison on drug charges. All had been using illegal drugs when they were arrested, and several sold them. Charlie Hunter, arrested for dealing crack, insists "I only had one rock, and I was goin' to smoke it." He says he couldn't have been a dealer because "any crack I was supposed to sell would have just gone up in smoke." The real reason he is locked up today, however, is because this conviction violated his earlier parole on a life sentence received in 1970 for armed robbery.

> In our interviews with inmates in four different state prisons, two constants emerged: Family problems and drugs.

William Almesticia was arrested for possession of drugs and a firearm. He says the gun was his but the drugs weren't, that they belonged to a friend who received a lighter sentence by shifting the blame. (Almost all the prisoners we interviewed maintained they were victims of misprosecution, many of them with cunning charm.) "I guess the other dude paid more for his lawyer," is Almesticia's argument today.

Serving time on a drug charge, Almesticia is one of the prisoners that so concern left-wing activists. But he was only sentenced to probation and house arrest on the original drug and weapons charges. He is in jail today simply because he broke that probation within a week, leaving his house and being picked up in a car (with an unlicensed driver) again carrying a gun.

You've already met drug possessor Adam Lafleur, who ran highly organized cocaine distributions for many years. His fellow inmate Sean Phillips is another drug possessor who doesn't fit the harmless pot smoker profile. Only 24, he was picked up with cocaine too, but is serving his second prison sentence. His first was for conspiracy to commit armed robbery.

Then, there is William Gardner, 36, and, judging by his ducktail, a victim of too many James Dean movies. He's in prison this time for possession of the cracker drug of choice, methamphetamine (aka "speed"). Gardner admits he was dealing his meth, which he purchased from a crime family in Mexico. The possession charge was a result of a plea bargain, down from possession and resisting arrest. His criminal career has been quite diversified, with previous convictions for home invasion, burglary, grand theft auto, aggravated assault on a police officer, failure to appear, and escape.

Xavier Banks is another example of how the drug laws actually work. Arrested as a juvenile for selling crack, he spent only 21 days in confinement. He's a little put out about his present sentence for carjacking, received after he was tried as an adult. He'll likely spend seven years at Hendry Correctional Institution—a sentence that would have been shorter if he hadn't run over the owner of the Lexus he boosted. If drug crimes actually resulted in long prison sentences, the owner of the Lexus would still be driving it around Miami.

Not one of the individuals we interviewed appeared to be a victim of a criminal justice system out of control. The only victims we uncovered were those who stood between our interviewees and the things they wanted. When someone like newspaper columnist Tom Teepen writes, "there are about 470,000 Americans—few of them violent—either awaiting trial or doing time

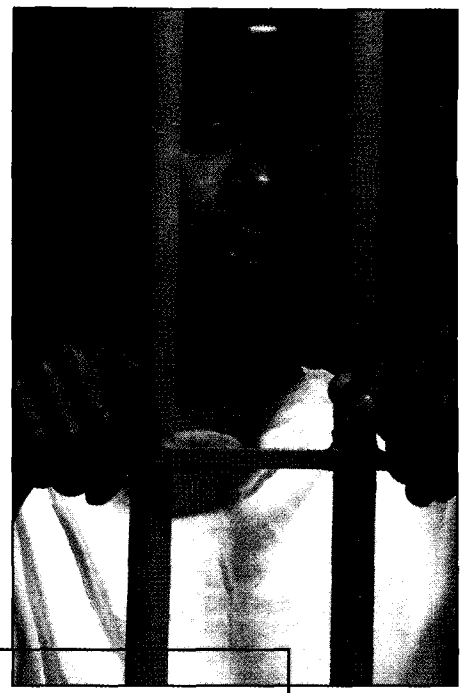
*Blake Hurst is a* TAE *contributing writer.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for drug charges," he is flat-out misleading readers about the nature of people serving time for drug charges.

Minnesota recently studied people who served time in its prisons for drug charges. They found the large proportion of them were recidivists, and that they were just as likely to be returned to prison for violent crimes as were returnees who had originally been imprisoned for violent crimes. The criminal justice system is a huge sorting mechanism—not always perfect, but pretty efficient at putting away those who are serious threats to their fellow citizens.

Serious crime fell substantially over the last decade. The drop has been attributed to many factors, but it's clear a very big one is the increase in the number of bad guys held in lock-up. The men and women interviewed for this article were brutally frank in describing the length and breadth of their criminal careers (even while most claimed innocence of the particular crime that led to their present incarceration). One has to assume most of them would be continuing their felonious ways if they weren't serving time.



Eyewire

The men and women we talked to were brutally frank in describing the length and breadth of their criminal careers.

Morgan Reynolds, a professor at Texas A&M University, has developed statistics on crime and imprisonment: "In 1950, the chances of going to prison for a serious crime of violence or burglary were 5.3 percent, and crime was low. By 1970, the odds had collapsed to 1.3 percent and, by the end of the decade, had recovered to only 1.6 percent. In fact, during the crime explosion of the 1960s and 1970s, the absolute number of new adult commitments to prisons for serious crimes of violence and burglary actually declined, while the number of such crimes reported to police nearly tripled. The system became a bad joke. By 1990, however, the odds of prison time had increased to 2.4 percent, and, by 1997, to 2.9 percent." In other words, crime has dropped as the likely cost of committing crime has increased.

According to research by John DiIulio and Anne Phiel, prisoners commit an average of 12 crimes a year when free. Economist Steven Levitt finds similarly that "incarcerating one additional prisoner reduces the number of crimes by approximately 13 per year." Other studies come up with numbers over 20. Patrick Langan of the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics calculated that "tripling the prison population from 1975 to 1989 may have [prevented] 390,000 murders, rapes, robberies, and aggravated assaults in 1989 alone." Econometric analysis suggests recent increases in public investment in jails have returned about two dollars for every dollar spent.

So prisons are necessary, and we have been wise to increase the number of anti-social people contained within them. A society that lacks the self-confidence to protect itself from individuals who will not follow the rules is in danger. That said, it must be acknowledged that decisions about putting people behind bars should never be made lightly—because most prisons today are very bad places to be.

At Glades Correctional Institution near Belle Glades, Florida, the inmates live in two-story cell blocks, with a wide hallway running between the facing cells. At the end of the hall in each wing is a common area, where the television and phones are located. TV is important to prisoners, and assistant warden Jim Tridico reports a steep drop off in disciplinary problems immediately before "Monday Night Football." Showers are located between the cellblock and the common area, and prisoners can lock the shower doors; they have no privacy, however, as the doors are simply bars, and the stalls are in full view of the inmates watching television. The TV is bolted to the wall about 20 feet above the three plain wooden benches, and it blares stridently in the hard, echoing room. The whole cellblock is unadorned cement block, and a visitor's first impression is the noise level—harsh enough to be uncomfortable. The phones are located behind the benches, and conversations are carried on at high volume, in full view and hearing of the rest of the prisoners.

Each cell contains two stainless steel bunks with a mattress pad, a stainless steel mirror, a steeljacket (a stripped-down combination toilet and sink made of stainless steel), and two trunks for the prisoners' possessions. The prisoners can buy padlocks at the canteen to secure their belongings. The padlock is the weapon of choice, at least in Hendry, where Xavier Banks reports that other inmates wielding a lock in the toe of a sock have attacked him. In Hendry, the gangs charge inmates $40 a month "rent," or protection money. Prisoners are reluctant to talk about gangs, but several report that Florida inmates tend to split along geographical lines, with the prisoners from the Orlando area in one group, and the Dade and Palm Beach county prisoners in another. Race is another divide.

Prisoners fearful of being harmed by other inmates can ask to be separated from the general population; they are placed in lockdown and spend 23 hours a day by themselves in the confinement area. Prisoners set apart for disciplinary reasons can be confined to simple concrete rooms containing nothing but a steeljacket. They sit and sleep on the floor, without any reading materials except Bibles or other religious works. Suicidal prisoners are confined without anything in their cells they could use to harm themselves, sleeping on their steel bunks without pad or blanket.

There are constant efforts to ferment any drink or food containing sugar into alcoholic drinks known as "buck." Drugs get



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sneaked in through visitors or corrupt guards. Contraband weapons will be made out of almost anything.

A Florida prisoner convicted of raping another inmate is automatically sentenced to life, so the cons who prey on other inmates have honed their seduction techniques. One prisoner explained the procedure to us: A new inmate is threatened by one of two inmates working in concert. The second conspirator appears to come to the new arrival's aid, but his protection comes with a price; soon the new prisoner is a "do boy," at the beck and call of his protector for everything from errand-running to sexual service.

Marta Villacorta, a regional director in Florida's prison system, has been a warden in both men's and women's prisons. The "control and power issues" in the two kinds of prisons are different, she explains. Men's prisons have an internal structure based on physical power and money. When they have a problem, it's caused by a power struggle, or a drug deal gone bad. Women's institutions are different. To maintain order, corrections officers must be aware of the "family" structures in a women's prison. The female inmates establish households, with a physically strong, aggressive woman as the father, her lover as the mother, younger inmates as the children, and older inmates as grandmother and grandfather. They will address each other as mom and dad, aunt and uncle, and when there are problems leading to a "divorce," it can disrupt the whole prison.

According to Villacorta and Denise White, the warden of the women's facility at Dade C.I., when one member of these prison families is transferred to another prison, women prisoners will "go through unbelievable things to get back with their partner." These attempts to replicate household structures are profoundly disturbing and sad reminders of the artificiality of prison existence.

Not only are prisons grim and dehumanizing, they are expensive. Nationwide, the cost of imprisonment is around $25,000 per inmate per year, although Florida is somewhat below the national average. One way governments have recently attempted to control costs is by privatizing the building and operation of prisons. The first private prisons in the U.S. went up in 1983, and the industry has expanded in fits and starts in the years since.

Critics fear the profit motive will lead private prison officials to cut corners. Of course, that logic could be used against having private firms provide health care, food, education, medicine, houses, indeed almost anything. States have depended on private companies to build bridges and highways for generations, and as long as those firms are bound by a well-drawn contract and their work is inspected, we can travel across those bridges without worry.

A more interesting objection against private prisons is made by Villacorta, who argues we shouldn't give private entities power over the freedom of inmates. Private facilities in Florida and elsewhere cannot control the length of inmates' sentences. In fact, Florida's private facilities have a state official on site to oversee all "liberty issues." But corrections officers and other officials in private institutions do have authority over "gain time"—that portion of a prisoner's sentence that can be forgiven for good behavior. Villacorta argues private prisons have an incentive to withhold gain time in order to increase profits, and also that guards in public facilities are ultimately responsible to the governor, and hence the voters, while private guards are not.

These criticisms can be answered. First, prisoners are not entitled to a prison term any shorter than the one to which they were sentenced. Second, as a practical matter, prisoners outnumber guards. Any attempt to systematically deny gain time in order to increase profits would be met by resistance from the prisoners, who, almost to a man, have experience in public facilities, know how gain time works there, and are exceedingly well versed in their rights. Interviews with prisoners in Moore Haven C.I., the private prison *TAE* visited for this article, found that inmates who had spent time in both public facilities and at Moore Haven considered correctional officers less confrontational in the private prison, and judged it a much better place to be confined overall.

To maintain order, corrections officers must be aware of the "family structures" in a women's prison.

Moore Haven is managed by the Wackenhut Security Corporation under a two-year contract. The actual facility is owned by the state, with Wackenhut responsible for staffing and day-to-day management. So, should Wackenhut's performance be substandard, the state can cancel the contract without unwinding a complicated real estate deal. The legislation permitting private prisons in Florida requires that they provide comparable services to state-run institutions at a 7.5 percent cost savings.

The Moore Haven facility is new and was built using the latest prison technology. Prisoners are housed in six-sided, 2-story quads, with a control center staffed by a guard in the center. The guard in the control room can see all the cells in the quad; he locks and unlocks doors from inside the control center. The prisoners take their meals within their quads, 50 at a time. The innovative design provides control with less staffing, one way Wackenhut meets the mandated cost savings. They also achieve savings by contracting out for some services without the constraints that sometimes force public facilities to buy from high-cost suppliers.

Moore Haven is much more pleasant than the other facilities *TAE* visited, with brighter colors, a more inviting "visitors park," and an impressive array of classrooms and programs. This may be partly because it is newer than the public facilities we inspected, but the added amenities at private facilities do open them to the criticism that they "coddle" their inmates in order to maintain discipline. Inmates told *TAE* that more classes are offered at Moore Haven than comparable state-run facilities. Wackenhut's drug counseling programs are so successful that, according to Charles Haddad in *Business Week*, "State legislators in Oklahoma and New Mexico have asked Wackenhut to duplicate its intensive nine-month drug rehabilitation program in their states."

The corrections officers at private prisons undergo the same training required of Florida's public corrections officers. Wackenhut saves money by using personnel who have not been trained as officers—and so require less pay—in administrative positions that don't involve contact with prisoners.

Studies comparing private to public facilities in Louisiana show a five-year savings in operating costs of about 12.8 percent; Arizona reduced costs by about 13.8 percent, and in Florida, the state organization charged with monitoring private prisons



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> Tripling the prison population may have prevented 390,000 murders, rapes, robberies, and aggravated assaults annually.

found 3.5 percent savings in one year, 10.6 percent savings the next. The same research review, by retired professor of criminology Charles Thomas, formerly of the University of Florida and now a board member for a private prison firm, found that although private companies are *usually* more efficient, some public facilities are operated at a lower cost than comparable private facilities in the same state. So cost savings from privatization, while they can be substantial, are not a given.

As is often the case with privatization of government services, the biggest advantage is often innovation and higher quality service, not just lower cost. Wackenhut has made improvements in both prison design and programs that the state of Florida is adopting elsewhere, modifications that would not have been adopted as quickly, perhaps at all, without competition from private vendors. Sentencing people to humane lock-up will always be expensive, and privately run institutions offer no panacea on costs. But competition seems to hold the prospect of making both public and private facilities operate more effectively.

Another way of easing prisoners' cost to society is through prison work. Almost all prisoners work, but most jobs are "make work," usually light housekeeping and kitchen labor. But some prisons have programs that actually produce revenue, for workers and prison alike. At Hendry C.I. *TAE* visited a large prison farm which raises beef and citrus on nearby land.

The prisoners working there are paid a wage, part of which goes to compensate crime victims, part of which pays for prisoners' room and board, and a portion which the prisoners can keep. Fruit pickers on the citrus farm are paid by piece work and can earn enough to accumulate a nest egg for when they leave prison. Tommy Tew, in charge of the Hendry farm, says his most efficient picker will have saved $5,000 by the time he leaves and plans to start his own business.

Prisoners at the farm do all the work, with prison employees supervising. The convicts handle large machinery with élan and are clearly well trained and competent. The state certifies the operators, giving them skills that make them desirable employees for neighboring farms when their sentences are over. Tew says long-term workers gain a sense of "ownership" and take pride in what they do.

Neighboring farmers see the prison grove, whose production is too small to depress prices, as a source of trained labor, always in short supply in agriculture, not a competitor. More typically, prison industries compete directly with private operations, and are resented mightily by labor unions and some businesses.

About 5,000 Florida prisoners work in convict businesses, out of nearly 70,000 prisoners in the state system. Not only fear of complaints from private competitors but also difficulties of supervising workers have kept that number from growing much. Hendry's orange pickers work outside walls, often out of sight of guards. Only prisoners who are not likely to run off are allowed to work there, and most inmates don't qualify.

Prison work used to be the norm, with prisoners expected to earn their keep. In 1885, three-fourths of U.S. inmates were involved in productive labor, according to *Corrections Forum*. But abuse scandals and complaints from unions and businesses have led to the present situation, where only 17 percent of federal prisoners and an even smaller percentage of state convicts now work.

Prison labor seems to have rehabilitative as well as economic value. Only 16 percent of working convicts in Florida later return to prison, compared to 40 percent of general inmates. Federal Prison Industries, the federal counterpart to Florida's program, enjoys similar success, with a return rate about 20 percent lower than the rest of the inmate population. Prison industry should clearly be expanded.

Sarah Allen, 22, who is serving a life sentence for murder, started "gangbangin'" when she was 13. She never knew her father; her mother, who raised her, was disabled. She left home at 15 and had her own apartment and car. She made a living by armed robbery and spent her days high on weed. She also had a job at Burger King, but could only work 25 hours a week, because she was underage. (Laws against armed robbery, breaking and entering, and smoking marijuana were ignored, but at least the labor laws were enforced.) She liked her job serving Whoppers. "I worked at the drive up window. It was only two blocks from the projects where I grew up. I'd lean out the window and smoke weed with the people from the area. The managers didn't care; they were smokin' weed too. It was just another place to party."

Unlike many of the prisoners *TAE* interviewed, Allen doesn't profess a strong religious faith. During her six months in county jail, she tried to "do good." She says "I read the Bible, front to back, and I even stopped cursing. But as soon as the judge hit the gavel and said, 'You have two life sentences,' I said f**k that s**t."

All the other prisoners we spoke to attend chapel or Bible or Koran study regularly, and insist religion will make a difference in their post-prison life. It's easy to be skeptical when murderers and sex offenders profess faith, particularly because so many inmates are clearly practiced liars and sociopaths willing to do anything to save their skins. But when a serious criminal is rehabilitated, religious faith is probably the force most often involved.

Villacorta, who has dedicated her career to the proposition that people can change, says "What we call rehabilitation is often just maturity." With criminal recidivism running over 40 percent, she is realistic. Imprisonment, she notes, is never the result of a single decision, but rather a long series of wrong decisions. Only a sustained series of right decisions can get a person back on track.

Changing criminal behavior usually requires replacing the moral compass within the wrongdoer. That is terribly difficult. The more realistic, and most important, function of prisons is to remove predators from society so they can't take advantage of other citizens. Prison is also necessary because victims of crime justly demand retribution and punishment. But the possibility of rehabilitation is a hope we must always entertain.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Transcript

*Words worth repeating*

# China's Communists Walk a Thin Line

*Just prior to the U.S.-China aircraft incident, the following remarks were delivered at the American Enterprise Institute by Willy Lam, China correspondent for 12 years at Hong Kong's* South China Morning Post.

A recent, important development within China is the Communist Party's shift of focus to economic themes in order to justify its own existence and right to rule. As a result, China must make economic progress for the regime to remain in power.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Deng Xiaoping initiated a round of economic reforms and said China would not follow in the the USSR's footsteps because China could still improve its standard of living. After the fall of Milosovich in Yugoslavia, President Jiang Zemin repeated Deng's message in private discussions. He said Beijing would not go the way of Yugoslavia because China still has 5 to 7 percent growth every year, and the Party can satisfy the people's basic needs.

When Premier Zhu Rongji was in Singapore, he said something very interesting to reporters: He could understand the frustration of people in Hong Kong, because their wages are frozen and consumer confidence is very low. He said he had learned a lesson from Hong Kong, and that wages in China will definitely be raised this year, because he didn't want to see the people disappointed. According to various reports, the salaries of civil servants could rise 30 percent.

This focus on giving benefits to people to justify the Communist Party's continued monopolization of power is very different from the earlier obsession with revolutionary ideas.

Jiang Zemin has harped over and over that the Communist Party must represent the foremost in economic, technological, and cultural trends of the world. If the Communist Party best advances the economy, technology, and culture, he says, then it can stay on forever as the ruling party of China. While this might seem a prosaic and not very original statement, it has important implications.

First, the Communist Party was traditionally known as the party of the proletariat. By saying the Party should focus on the most advanced achievements of technology and so forth, Jiang Zemin is in fact saying the Party's future lies in the hands of scientists, high-tech people, the Internet crowd, private entrepreneurs, and so forth.

If the Party is willing to embrace such elements, then the Marxist idea of class struggle would become obsolete. There should be no need for the dictatorship of the proletariat. And, to some extent, no need for the Party to control the armed forces—because one justification for the Communist Party's holding the reins of the People's Liberation Army is that the Party needs the army to ensure the subservience of the higher classes. Needless to say, the old guard within China's Communist Party are hostile to such ideas.

Still, reformers within the new generation of Chinese leadership are exploring the possibility of accelerated changes, probably to begin around 2005. It is encouraging that some intellectuals have gone to Europe to study the social democratic model. There has been talk that perhaps after a few decades, provided the economy is stable and there are no overt challenges to the regime, there might be some movement to remodel the Communist Party along the lines of a social democratic party in Europe.

For the next few years, however, I don't see any major changes. The foremost item on the agenda is preparing for entry into the World Trade Organization, and minimizing the disruptions which will come with the influx of foreign products and foreign companies. Minimizing disruptions often means maximizing controls.

In spite of the new ideas being floated by the Politburo advisors, we see no mention of lifting the ban on the formation of new political parties. The Communist Party will remain the only party allowed to exist and operate.

Control will continue to be very tightly asserted via the People's Armed Police, a militarized force which has expanded from roughly 600,000 at the time of the Tiananmen Square massacre to more than 1 million currently. Its major task is to ensure law and order in response to frequent unrest in the cities and the countryside.

There also has been more restriction of the distribution of books, particularly those put out by non-party-affiliated publishers, and stricter censorship in the newspapers and on the Internet. The Party just issued a new set of regulations listing about 100 areas Internet content providers cannot go into.

At the same time, there is a disturbing fanning of nationalism. After the fall of Milosovich, the Chinese leadership became extremely nervous about a domino effect. From Beijing's perspective, NATO successfully got rid of Milosovich. Would there be similar attempts to destabilize the remaining Communist regimes in Cuba, North Korea, China? That's why this year we have seen one nationalism campaign after another.

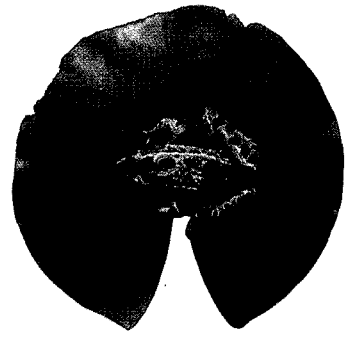
For Jiang Zemin as well as his younger colleagues, stability remains the foremost task. And in the Chinese Communist tradition, stability means tightened control over the country. It does not mean liberalization.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# In Real Life

*First-person America*



# Frogs

When I watched each of my three sons flailing the nursery air after birth, my first clear thought was that we had some serious work to do to smooth out those jerky arm motions before they could become the fine fly fishermen I hoped they would be.

Not long after the third one was born, therefore, I bought three pairs of rubber boots, which looked like hip boots on them. I decided to start them out with casting gear, and I searched until I found some nearly unbreakable fiberglass rods and dependable reels.

I also talked to several people about where we should fish, eventually deciding on Myers Lake. Once you step off its bank into the water, you rarely sink very far into the mud, never far enough to risk losing boots or to make young boys think they're being sucked into a hole. And in late May and early June bluegills and sunfish aggressively guard their spawning beds within casting distance of the shoreline.

When we set out, the boys were still pretty young—Jon was seven, Joel was six, and Jason was three. But I thought the sooner they started, the sooner they could get really good. Once we reached the lake, the boys obeyed without a squawk when I told them to sit on a picnic table while I finished rigging their poles. But as we walked to the shore, a leopard frog jumped across Jason's path.

And that was the first of dozens, all basking in the sun near the shore till we came trundling through. Then they went into a popcorn frenzy of jumping—many into the water, many away from us, a few actually bouncing off our legs.

The boys took several quick looks—at me, at one another, and at the frogs. Then, simultaneously, they dropped their rods, yanked off their boots and socks, and started creeping and lunging after the frogs. Soon they persuaded me, still in my waders, to get down on hands and knees and try to herd the frogs toward the flexing traps of their little hands.

When one would catch a frog, he would bring it over to show it off. "Look, Dad, look!" he exulted as the nearly squished frog excreted orangish liquid through his fingers and down his forearm. "It's a great big one, maybe the king of all the frogs, but leaking like crazy!"

They were not happy when after 40 minutes or so I marched them back to the car, grass stains on their shorts, the greenish residue of goose droppings on their knees, blades of grass between their toes.

"But I thought we came here to fish," Jon said.

"I thought so, too. But we sure can't fish now. When you guys tossed your rods on the ground, you got the lines all tangled up, and there's sand in the reels—if we use them now, we'll wreck the gears."

They sulked for a while, but on the way home it took them only a couple of miles before they started bickering about who had caught the most frogs, the largest frog, the fastest frog, the rarest frog, the most colorful frog, and on and on.

"How did it go?" my wife asked as I carried the mass of rods into the basement. "It was a mess," I sighed. "We never even got a line in the water. We walked into jumping frogs near the shore, and all the boys wanted to do was chase them."

"It was bad? When the boys came in, they were really excited—they sounded like they had a great time."

"The boys? Why doesn't anyone ever think about me? It was chaos. And now I have half a day's work trying to untangle the lines and clean out the reels. No plan should get as messed up as that one did. I don't think I'll take all three of them fishing at the same time ever again."

After that, I took one at a time fishing. And I guided each one through a sequence of stages: Each first learned to use casting equipment, then spinning equipment, and finally fly fishing equipment. Each in his turn made impressive progress, and I took silent pride in their development.

About a dozen years after the fiasco at Myers Lake, Jason and I were resting on the south bank of the Au Sable River after dark, waiting for the wonder of the hex hatch to start. The crickets and peepers seemed to be trying to crush us with their clamor, and every 30 seconds or so a bullfrog would belch out such an alarming croak that we would jump a little and then move a bit closer to each other.

"That last one must be the king of all bullfrogs," Jason whispered.

"I guess."

"Dad?"

"Yeah?"

"Do you remember that day you took us out to that beach to hunt frogs?"

"Huh?"

"That time all three of us guys had such a blast catching those frogs? And you were crawling around with us. You were so excited, I remember, that you never even took off your waders. You weren't the best frog-catcher, though. And all the time you had goose crap smeared on your cheek. That was a mad-awesome day. Do you remember it?"

"Hmmm."

"Do you?"

"I'm afraid it's coming back to me."

*William J. Vande Kopple teaches English at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Beat the Press

*The hand that rules the press...rules the country*—Judge Learned Hand

## The Decline of Muckraking

They call it the "news" business, but when it comes to the subjects they tackle, elite journalists live in the distant past. Today's press is so nostalgic for the days when muckraking meant exposing the evil doings of fatcat businessmen, it's become blind to new realities.

Consider the recent exposés of Jesse Jackson's obviously dubious finances. The Rev. says if it weren't for a "right-wing conspiracy" these allegations would never have arisen. And it's true conservative groups filed lawsuits to pry open Jackson's books. But only because the press refused to investigate on its own. You see, many journalists don't think it's possible for liberal groups, especially sacred cows like civil rights organizations, to be corrupt.

Yet can anyone doubt that if, say, Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition had "accounting practices" like the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition—including scoring lucrative beer distributorships for Robertson's kids—we wouldn't have had to wait for an ACLU lawsuit to hear about it? Where were the fearless, icon-smashing reporters of *Newsweek*, CNN, and so forth when it came to Jesse's shenanigans? Why did it take a lawsuit from "knuckle-dragging conservatives" to bring the issue into the open?

Muckraking—from Upton Sinclair to Ralph Nader—was originally motivated by a desire to force government to rein in corporations that abused their employees, customers, and the environment. But today there are enough regulatory agencies—FCC, FTC, EPA, FDA, FERC, IRS, OSHA, FDIC, SEC, etc.—to frighten any business into submission, right down to the level of your local six-year-old's lemonade stand. Today's question is, Who is keeping an eye on the advocates of "reform" and expanded government?

Consider how journalists describe events in Washington. When legislation passes, government is "moving forward" and "taking action" in order to "address problems" and "unjust conditions." By contrast, when there are efforts to repeal bad laws and excessive regulations, or attempts to place more responsibility on individuals or local communities, we invariably hear talk of "moving backward" or "dismantling protections."

Race is one of the biggest distorters of media treatments. Convinced their role is always to expose white racism, the press ignores the fact that black bigotry against whites is just as common, perhaps more so. Have you heard of a well-documented, decade-long trend in staged racist hoaxes on college campuses? Probably not, because the press loves to spotlight a hate crime, and rarely admits it when they don't exist (as with the church-burning fraud of the mid-1990s).

With an eye toward restoring some balance to muckraking, I offer, free of charge, a few sacred cows the press might want to check out:

• The "Arctic National Wildlife Refuge"—contrary to implications, it's not the kind of grassy paradise we tell our kids their dogs go to when hit by a car, but a semi-frozen swamp drenched in complete darkness for two thirds of the year.

• The National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL)—it ain't exactly the 4-H Club; in fact, it favors infanticide. Last September, House Republicans passed the Born-alive Infant Protection Act, which said if a woman gives birth to a baby during an abortion, the doctors aren't allowed to kill the child. Staunch pro-choice N.Y. Representative Jerrold Nadler said the bill's purpose was "to get the pro-choice members to vote against it so [pro-lifers] can slander us and say we are for infanticide." And yet, though NARAL came out steadfastly against the bill—that is, in favor of something even Jerry Nadler thinks is infanticide—the press still treats NARAL as a mainstream group.

• Paul Ehrlich, author of *The Population Bomb*—he's never been right in a single major prediction. And yet the *New York Times* treats each new dire warning from this man—who suggested in 1968 that "hundreds of millions" of people would starve to death in a "Great Die-Off" during the 1980s—as if it were gospel.

There are plenty of other great untold stories out there. Imagine if CBS News suddenly looked into how well women in the military were really measuring up. Or whether there are more forests in the U.S. today than a century ago.

What if the *New York Times* printed calculations showing nuclear power has killed about as many people as Ted Kennedy's car? Perhaps Katie Couric could prepare a special report revealing that monogamous relationships are about the last thing most gay men hanker for.

If it looked around, CNN might discover that "the rich" are very often Democrats, and even single moms can be Republicans. And how about a *Newsweek* story showing that satellite data don't provide much evidence for global warming?

There was a time when the worst excesses of the status quo could be found in the greed, exploitations, and lies of fat, rich, white guys. Today, there's still plenty of greed, exploitation, and lying going on. But because fat sponging black guys like Al Sharpton stand in the press's left-side blind spot, we don't hear about much of it.

—Jonah Goldberg

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Fantasy Economist

# Dictator for a Day

*By Russell Roberts*

"I'll state the rules again," said Sam to his class of students. "You are a dictator. You can pass one law while you are dictator. One law and one law only. And it has to be a law, not merely a good intention. You cannot simply decree that people love one another or that diseases come to an end or that nobody gets hurt in car accidents. You must defend your choice mindful of the laws of nature and the laws of economics. Now who would like to begin?"

"I would pass a law requiring all students to graduate from high school," a girl's voice suggested.

"Why?" Sam asked.

"High school drop-outs cause a lot of problems. They commit crimes. Then they have trouble finding jobs and they end up on welfare. "

"So everyone would have to stay in school. Do you think it would be hard to monitor compliance?" Sam asked.

"Not really."

"What would you do with people who were absent? What about kids leaving after attendance got taken? And let's suppose everyone complies with the law. What are you going to do about the kids who don't want to be there and ruin class for the others? Of course what you'd really like is a law that forced all students to stay interested in their classes. But that is against the rules. Who else has a proposal for the perfect law?"

The students kept proposing ideas and Sam kept poking holes in them. It was amazing how differently the students thought about the problems facing the country and how varied their solutions were.

Soon there was a clamor in the classroom. "All right, all right," said Sam.

"You want to know my law. Fair enough. The one thing that I think would most transform America and make it a better place. But even though I believe it to be the best law, I would not pass it even if I were dictator for a day. Your job is to figure out why."

The class grew quiet.

"If I could pass one law," Sam continued, "and one law only, it would be—" he paused, "to ban TV."

Sam's suggestion was met with dumbfounded silence.

"Watching television is a total waste of time. It's the secret addiction. It turns us into zombies, flitting from channel to channel to escape reality."

Someone in the class snickered. "You laugh. But how many of you watch at least two hours a day? Three? Do you think you could go cold turkey? Do you think your life would be richer if you did? Ban TV and children begin to explore the world rather than sitting stupefied in front of the box in the corner. Ban television and families talk to each other over dinner, people begin reading again. Ban television and a person can learn to sit and think, a lost art. "

"But some shows are good," a student interrupted.

"Aha!" Sam cried. "As with every policy we've discussed, there's a cost. But I'm confident the benefits far outweigh the costs. There are probably a few good shows. But the sewage far outweighs the spring water. Violence, sleaziness—"

Some members of the class giggled at the old-fashioned nature of this tirade.

"Seriously, it takes a toll on human decency. Watch MTV and your attitude toward women is cheapened. Watch enough murders on television and real murders become unfortunate annoyances rather than tragedies of immeasurable proportion."

*"Why do people watch TV for four hours a night? Because their lives are empty. And a law can't change that."*

Sam stopped to catch his breath.

"I speak from experience. I'm a recovering addict. When I realized how many nights I lost, hand on the remote, surfing the cable channels, I sprang into action. First I put the TV in the least comfortable room in my apartment. Then I dropped cable. Finally I sold my set. I'm free! And I'll tell you something. I read more books, do more volunteering, and spend more time talking to my friends and family than ever before. But I don't fool myself. I remain an addict. When I'm in a hotel I flip on the set and flip out. So I have no illusions about my ability to handle the temptation to avoid real life."

"So," Sam continued, "I believe TV is hazardous to your brain. But you know what? If I were dictator for a day, I still wouldn't ban it. Do you know why not?"



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There was a tumult of answers but Sam quieted the class. "To help you guess, let's play one more game. It comes from a book called *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, by Robert Nozick. Has anybody read it?" Sam paused. "Of course not. You're too busy watching trashy TV."

The class laughed.

"It involves what we'll call a Dream Machine. Once you have programmed it correctly and are hooked up to its sensors and electrodes, you experience any life you can possibly imagine—the ultimate game of virtual reality. Any dream will come true. While you are on the machine you can be President of the United States or the greatest rock star of all time. You can climb Everest, cure cancer, win an Oscar, make a billion dollars a year. And here is the magic of the Dream Machine. Unlike the dreams of slumber, these dreams will feel totally real. You will be lying on a table, hooked up to the Dream Machine, but in your consciousness you will be surfing flawlessly in Hawaii, singing the most popular song of all time, winning the NBA championship for the tenth time in a row, and it will all be as vivid as the feel of the pencil in your hand and the sound of my voice. How many of you would like to take the Dream Machine out for a spin?"

Every hand in the room went up.

"Of course you would," Sam continued. "But there's one detail I neglected to mention. This imaginary life that you get to experience while on the Dream Machine must replace your actual life. You will never wake up. You enter the room today as the teenager you are. You win the Masters, the Nobel Peace Prize, surpass the popularity of the Beatles, then you grow old and die. It can be a painless death, preceded by a glorious old age full of parades and honors. But after they unhook the last electrode, your brain will cease functioning and they will put you in the ground. While you're on the machine, the river of time will appear to flow at the same speed that it does now, out here in the real world. But in fact, your entire time on the machine will be less than five minutes. Then they will cart you off and bring in the next customer. Still interested?"

*A good life is real.*
*It's full of success—*
*and failure.*

There was silence in the room. Finally Sam filled it.

"I didn't think so. Why not?"

"It's not real," someone called out.

"I know," Sam said. "But you won't know that. It will feel real."

"But it's fake," a student said. "While you're on the machine, you will have cured cancer, but people outside of the machine will still be dying from it."

"That's true," Sam said. "But why would you care? For me the answer is that life on the Dream Machine is no life at all. Not only because it's not real. But also because the Dream Machine strips life of everything that makes life worth living. The striving, the seeking, and the finding. And the failing."

Sam continued, "Where's the magic of the 'finding' if you can never fail? If I offered you a billion dollars a year for the rest of your life, no questions asked, and the only string attached is that every year you must spend every dollar, would you take it? If you did, would you be happy?"

"Of course you'd be happy," a student said.

"For a while, you'd be deliriously happy," Sam continued. "Imagine the first day. Lobster and caviar for breakfast, lunch in Paris after a brisk trip on the Concorde with a hundred close personal friends, then dinner in New York in the Presidential Suite of the Plaza Hotel. Maybe courtside seats sitting with Spike Lee at the Knicks game. It's amazing for a day. Extraordinary for a week. But for a year? Ten years?"

"I'd like to try," said a student. The class rippled with laughter.

"I know. It sounds appealing. But after ten years of caviar for breakfast, caviar tastes like corn flakes. Let me tell you a story." The room went quiet.

"A man dies," Sam said, "and finds himself on the bank of the most beautiful trout stream in the world. The sky is a burning blue and a perfectly balanced fly rod rests in his hand. Before him lies a perfect trout stream, a mix of rapids and slow pockets of water. He realizes he's in heaven. He looks upstream at a swirl. A fish has risen for an insect! He makes an exquisite cast to the exact spot. In an instant, the water explodes as an enormous fish surges to the surface. After a brief struggle he lands the fish. It must weigh 12 pounds! He releases the trout and turns back to the water. Again, a fish rises for an insect. Again, he makes a perfect cast. He lands another beauty. It's a miracle. The man falls to his knees in gratitude to God. But as the day wears on, fish after fish after fish breaking to the surface in answer to his efforts, he decides to deliberately cast poorly. He starts yelling and thrashing the water to spook the fish. Still every cast yields a fish. And he knows that he is not in heaven after all."

A student asked, "What's that have to do with banning television?"

"A good life is real. It's full of success and failure. Coming up out of the valleys makes the view from the peaks exhilarating. Catching a fish on every cast isn't heaven. Having a billion dollars is boring. And banning TV doesn't really fix the problems in the addict's life. Why do people watch for four hours a night and fall asleep at the clicker? Because their lives are empty. A law doesn't change any of that.

"I'm proud of not having a television. It's a triumph, albeit a minor one, over my baser nature. Isn't that what life is all about? Coming to know yourself and finding a way to do what is right? What's the good of having the government do it for you through a law that reduces your choices? That's not life, any more than if we changed the rules of the game and allowed the government to end anger or jealousy or greed or lust or violence. Life in that world would be no life at all."

Sam stopped. The room was silent.

"Time's up. See you all tomorrow."

*This is adapted from Russell Roberts' new book* The Invisible Heart: An Economic Romance *(2001 MIT Press).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Law

# Where Legal Activists Come From

*By Kenneth Lee*

Lately, we've seen many crocodile tears shed by left-wing lawyers lamenting the judicial decisions which cemented George W. Bush's election victory. How wrong for unelected judges to be imposing themselves on the popular will! they have cried.

Ironically, the Left has for years been relying on courts to accomplish what it could not achieve in the voting booth. To take just one instance among thousands, when the New Jersey state legislature passed a law against taxpayer-financed abortions a few years ago, pro-choice groups didn't lobby politicians or try to elect similarly minded legislators. Instead, they challenged the statute in the New Jersey Supreme Court as a violation of the constitutional guarantee of equal protection. And sure enough, the court struck down the law as "discriminatory."

From freeing the mentally ill in New York City to defending racial preferences in California to contesting the presidential election in Florida, left-leaning lawyers have successfully waged a "rights revolution" over the last three decades. Trial lawyers increasingly litigate new entitlements for favored groups, establish exotic new individual rights, and overturn well-established legal and legislative prerogatives. As legal savant Walter Olson puts it, "Trial lawyers are now an unelected fourth branch of government."

What is less known is how law schools—as well as the corporate law firms which hire their students—increasingly provision young legal dreadnoughts to fight this rights revolution. The legal profession has always prided itself on providing *pro bono* services to indigent and unpopular defendants. In that same spirit, law schools have traditionally sponsored free legal clinics as a way to serve the "public good" and teach the art of advocacy. As a result, law school students routinely participate in clinics representing poor clients in, say, landlord-tenant disputes.

In recent years, however, law schools have shifted their focus away from individual needs and toward large, politically charged class-action lawsuits that attempt to force sweeping public policy changes. Each year, thousands of law students across the nation enroll in these courses, which generally include a classroom as well as a clinical component. In the classroom, professors lecture on novel legal theories (such as "environmental racism") which defy traditional common law norms. And in the clinical portion of the course, the students put the theory into action: Seasoned activist lawyers serve as mentors, helping students draft complaints and file briefs on behalf of the latest *cause célèbre*.

Law schools have established these clinics under the misleading rubric of promoting the "public interest." They claim that these clinical courses are steeped in the same venerable tradition of *pro bono* voluntarism. In reality, though, "public interest litigation" too often means training young lawyers to pursue partisan, often radical, policy goals—at the expense of the public.

Take Tulane Law School's Environmental Clinic, for instance. Tulane students waged a two-year court battle to prevent Shintech, Inc. from receiving government permits to build a $700 million PVC plant in the rural Louisiana neighborhood of St. James Parish. The law school students accused Shintech of "environmental racism," alleging that the plant pollution would unfairly affect the parish's poor, minority residents. Although polls showed that most of the parish residents supported building the plant, the students apparently had a different conception of what was in their interests. And their interminable litigation ultimately forced Shintech to build the plant elsewhere.

*Trial lawyers are now an unelected fourth branch of government, and it all starts in law school.*

While the law school students celebrated their legal victory, the residents of St. James Parish mourned the economic loss. Dale Hymel, the president of the parish, lamented that "Shintech had proposed a program to train unemployed people in the parish, and now they are going to miss out on a good quality of life. The lost revenue and taxes are also a blow to our school system and police." Grayling Brown, president of the St. James chapter of the NAACP, added "We really need the jobs."

Perhaps one of the oldest and most successful "impact litigation" clinics is the Rutgers Law School's Women's Rights Litigation Clinic. Founded about three decades ago, it has served as a

*Kenneth Lee, a clerk for a federal judge and a recent graduate of Harvard Law School, is a periodic contributor to* TAE.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

model for others. The Women's Rights Litigation Clinic was one of the groups that successfully challenged the New Jersey abortion statute barring taxpayer funds for abortions. That legal victory was doubly painful for abortion opponents because the law school used taxpayers' money in court to force the public to fork over even more of their money for abortion services.

Once the budding campus activists graduate from law school, their alma maters will often provide financial inducements for them to pursue a career in political agitation law. Many law schools will now forgive thousands of dollars in loans if students will commit to a career in public policy litigation. Last year, for example, Yale Law School dispensed $1.3 million to 227 graduates for this purpose, while New York University Law School gave over a million dollars to 185 graduates.

Ironically, staid, conservative law firms—with their rosters of corporate clients—also underwrite radical and often anti-business "impact litigation." Law firms donate millions of dollars in grants that draw law school students into legal activism. For example, Skadden Arps, a 1,200 lawyer corporate firm, has established a fellowship which pays recent graduates to work for two years at primarily left-leaning outfits like the NOW Legal Defense Fund and the Western Center on Law and Poverty. (The latter organization's claim to fame has been its successful lawsuit preventing the state of California from receiving a federal waiver to experiment with welfare reform.)

This tension between "impact litigation" and mainstream law is nowhere more apparent than at Harvard Law School. Each fall, hundreds of law firms, from Wall Street to Silicon Valley, descend on the Harvard campus to offer jobs to upcoming graduates. Activists grouse that this makes the law school a mere "corporate cog." In the past year, however, student activists have made stunning strides in removing the private sector "taint" from the school.

First, they pressured Harvard to stop holding receptions at law firms for incoming law students. The activists claimed such events subtly influence students to forgo activism and instead become buttoned-down corporate attorneys.

Then, after repeated protests and lobbying of the administration, activists succeeded in raising the salary cap from $51,000 to $72,000 for the public-interest loan forgiveness program. This means new graduates can now earn up to $72,000 at a rabblerousing "public interest" job and still qualify to have the school forgive part of their educational loan. (Only pampered Harvard students would think that a 25-year-old earning more than $51,000 a year was financially beleaguered.)

Emboldened by their success, student activists, with the help of liberal faculty members, recently promulgated a proposal mandating a graduation requirement of 40 hours of "public interest" work. As the faculty proposal put it, the school needs to "expose students both to substantive law issues and to the ambience of representing poor people." At least one professor, Charles Fried, who served as solicitor general under President Reagan, publicly opposed the plan. "This is the voluntarism of the Cuban cane fields," he wrote in a memo to faculty members. "We should teach our students the virtues of voluntarism, but we should respect their moral autonomy when we do so."

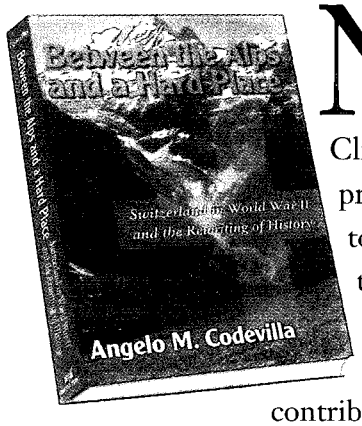
As Professor Fried notes, law students and lawyers can, and do, promote the public good by providing their services to those who cannot afford it. But this type of traditional *pro bono* work has lost favor among law school students who prefer the more potent radicalism of politicized class-action suits.

To be fair, some conservative legal foundations, like the Center for Individual Rights, engage in their own public policy litigation to counter the liberal rights revolution. But for the most part, the legal activism now being encouraged among students is of a distinctly left-wing variety.

In fact, lawyers who try to pursue conservative causes through public interest law face stiff institutional resistance. At Skadden Arps—whose fellows engage in virtually every imaginable liberal cause—a few conservative attorneys defended the legality of the anti-bilingual education initiative in California. More liberal members of the firm were not pleased. Some partners hinted the firm might even penalize such politically incorrect *pro bono* projects.

So much for liberality.


**The Truth about Switzerland**




Noted author Angelo Codevilla shows that the Clinton administration's pressure on Swiss banks to pay reparations for the Holocaust was a service rendered to its biggest campaign contributor, and contradicted established American policy toward Switzerland. *Between the Alps and a Hard Place* sets the record straight.

REGNERY PUBLISHING, INC.

**Available in bookstores everywhere or by calling**

**1-888-219-4747**


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Flashback

*To know nothing of what happened before you were born is to remain ever a child*—Cicero

# Bubba's Uncle Warren

Now that Bill Clinton is out of office—albeit in a way that brings to mind the apocryphal song "How Can I Miss You If You Won't Go Away?"—the question of his place in history inevitably arises. No doubt it will be years before a consensus emerges, but a comparison to his predecessor Warren G. Harding may suggest an answer. So far the parallels have been frighteningly close.

Like Clinton, Harding was a man of humble small-town origins, a fact he used for political advantage. A Baptist layman and an enthusiastic amateur musician, he pursued an undistinguished career in Ohio state government, until he ran for governor in 1910 and lost, at which point his political career seemed to be over. Six years later, however, he was a United States senator, and the keynote speaker at the Republican Party's national convention. Four years after that he was nominated for President.

He won the nomination because he was an affable man with a knack for public speaking and no inconvenient principles. He had ducked crucial Senate debates on Prohibition and women's suffrage, for example, and deliberately obfuscated his position on the League of Nations. This ambiguity made him attractive—or at least acceptable—to party regulars eager to regain the White House.

Harding's rhetoric was that of a second-rate John Kennedy—"We must have a citizenship less concerned about what the government can do for it and more anxious about what it can do for the nation"—but he seemed to offer a new generation of leadership: No previous President had been born after the Civil War. Harding's influential showbusiness friend, Al Jolson, campaigned for him across the country.

A handsome charmer of a man, notorious among his aides for plunging into any available crowd to shake hands, Harding won in a landslide. Although there were no opinion polls to document a "gender gap," his victory rested in part on the votes of women newly enfranchised by the Nineteenth Amendment. (He was the first President of his party to support women's suffrage.)

In office, he surrounded himself with cronies from his home state, who brought their corrupt statehouse ways to D.C. The Secretary of the Interior, for example, eventually went to prison for taking bribes. The director of the Veterans Bureau was jailed, too: He took payoffs from builders and sold hospital alcohol and drugs to bootleggers and dope dealers. The head of the FBI used agents to harass critics of the administration. The attorney general was twice indicted for fraud. One of the attorney general's friends died under suspicious circumstances of a gunshot wound to the head: The verdict was suicide, but rumors persisted that he had been murdered.

The President's strong-minded and independent wife, Flossie, had earlier proved herself an efficient, if domineering, businesswoman, and although her outspoken feminism sometimes embarrassed the administration, it was generally recognized that she had largely engineered his political career. She became the most public First Lady the nation had known, dealing directly with the press—even holding her own press conferences for women reporters. She reveled in the role, demanded and got her own Secret Service protection, met constantly at the White House with women's groups, advised her husband on everything from protocol to policy, and sometimes even drafted his speeches. Eleanor Roosevelt was one of the group known as "Flossie's gang."

The Harding marriage was largely one of convenience. The President resented his wife's imperious ways and sarcastically called her "the Duchess." For her part, she despised his weakness and resented his philandering, which continually threatened to erupt in public embarrassment. One old flame, the wife of an Ohio friend, threatened during the presidential campaign to publish letters documenting their love affair, even though she had already been given a Cadillac and offered $5,000 a year. His campaign manager kept her quiet with another $20,000 and a round-the-world cruise for her and her husband.

But the President's most notorious escapade involved a young Ohio woman—31 years younger, in fact—with whom he had begun a liaison while a senator. (He found her a job in Washington.) After becoming President, he had the Secret Service smuggle her frequently into the White House, where the two consorted in a closet down a short passage from the Oval Office. The infatuated woman stalked the President, showing up at public occasions where he was present. Apparently she hoped he would divorce his wife and marry her. She had a child, which the President supported with payments hand-delivered by the Secret Service (although it is not clear that it was actually his).

The President and his wife entertained special friends in the private quarters of the White House (serving illegal alcohol, which went on the books as medical supplies), but the President most enjoyed getting away from his wife to smoke and drink and play poker with his cronies, or to play golf with them at the

*continued on page 59*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now Playing

# Hollywood's Latest: Deperately Seeking Ugliness in The Everyday

Am I the only one craving more fake TV?

From the war-record films of the '40s to television's recent "Cops," "reality"-based entertainment has always been with us—but it has proliferated at an alarming rate this past year. As "Temptation Island" celebrated big ratings and "Survivor" entered its second season, movies such as *15 Minutes* and *Series 7* popped up in big screen theaters to spoof the reality genre.

The resulting products are sickeningly self-aware. The "Survivor" contestants started bickering within moments of meeting each other because they knew that's what viewers wanted to see. They are also baldly conscience-free. The movie *15 Minutes*, about a pair of murderers who videotape their crimes in a bid for celebrity status, sells the same grisly, voyeuristic violence it's supposedly condemning audiences for lapping up.

These shows fuel cynicism and moral numbness in the American public. At the screening of *15 Minutes* I attended, a woman in the theater leapt out of her seat to give a standing ovation when one of the movie's killers took ten bullets to the chest during the climax. Either she was completely ignorant of the irony of the moment or she had completely absorbed the filmmakers' hip detachment from violence and ugliness.

Detachment is one of the keys to this new brand of reality-based entertainment. After all, how close do you want to get to a storyline that admits to its own hypocrisy, makes fun of that hypocrisy, and then proceeds to frolic energetically in the slime of the whole hypocritical production? Twisted double standards become the order of the day. On a recent CBS news program, one of the contestants from the first season of "Survivor" complained that *this* year's players were only concerned with getting camera time—a comment he was more than happy to register in living color on national TV.

This circus of falsity can't help but leave us hopelessly jaded. Watching "Survivor" we're *meant* to scoff at the banality of the participants; watching *Series 7*—the big-screen send-up in which the contestants of a program called "The Contenders" must kill each other to win—we're *supposed* to laugh at the rubes. The next logical step is to simply sneer at ourselves.

The dignity of the people on display isn't a concern here (the folks who sign up for something like MTV's "The Real World" are probably already making fools of themselves in everyday life); it's the dignity of our public culture and our fellow citizens that we hate to see eroded. Spending week after week watching humans belittle each other—whether by revealing tawdry secrets on "Jerry Springer," inciting jealousy on "Temptation Island," or orchestrating betrayal on "Survivor"—has to deaden us at some point. Yet like pigs wallowing in the muck, we can't seem to get enough of our own filth.

This is also a miserable failure as art and entertainment. Today's obsession with the vulgar foibles of human nature has pushed aside traditional "fantasy-based" entertainment, where the audience is led to dream and imagine beyond the limits and pettiness of our everyday lives. (Pettiness is all shows like "Survivor" are concerned with.) Lifting us above the mundane is one of the central purposes and pleasures of entertainment and art. Truly ambitious entertainment gives us a vision, while this latest batch of reality-based junk gives us whole episodes about who forgot to refill the toilet paper dispenser in the group bathroom.

Chances are we'll be staring at the bathroom wall for a while longer. Usually, once something's been spoofed it spells death for the genre, but I doubt that's the case here. Reality-based entertainment feeds on itself. (Both *15 Minutes* and *Series 7* were in the works long before "Survivor" hit it big.) The producer's only challenge is to open new fronts for exploitation. Roasting rats and marrying millionaires this month. Fist-fighting and inflaming sexual jealousy in wave two. What comes next?

So what should you do if you don't care which contestant kept the rest of the tribe awake all night with his snoring?

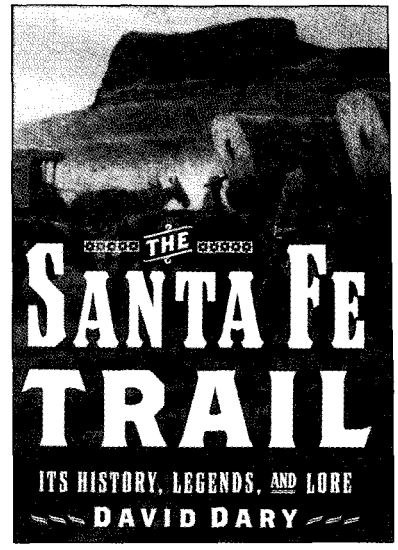
First, refuse to peep in that window, be horrified by what you see, and then respond by looking in again next Thursday at 8 p.m.

Then demand more movies and television shows that actually dare to dream, pretend, and imagine.

—Josh Larsen

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# BookTalk




## THE ENTREPRENEUR'S ROAD

By Bill Croke

*The Santa Fe Trail: Its History, Legends, and Lore*
*By David Dary*
*Knopf, 368 pages, $30*

"Early the following morning, as the travelers were breaking camp, someone in the group saw a party of Indians approaching from some distance. Fearing the worst, the party quickly forded the river and, once on the other side, prepared to defend itself.... Then the worst did happen. The Indians charged across the river and killed everybody but an eight-year-old girl, whom they took captive."

This passage is typical of David Dary's *The Santa Fe Trail*, a comprehensive and readable 300-year history of the primary western highway from the Mississippi to the Southwest. Unlike the Oregon Trail, which was principally an emigrant road to the California goldfields or the rich farmland of Oregon, the Santa Fe Trail evolved over three centuries as strictly a trade route.

The Spanish conquistadors Francisco Coronado and Juan de Onate pioneered parts of the future trail as they probed northward from Mexico in the sixteenth century in a futile search for gold and empire. Coronado, for instance, wandered the desolate plains of present-day Kansas in the summer of 1541 as he sought the legendary gold-paved "Seven Cities of Cibola." Frustrated, he executed the devious Indian slave responsible for guiding his wild goose chase.

By the mid-eighteenth century the French had founded the outpost of St. Louis on the Mississippi and were sending commercial-minded "voyageurs" toward New Spain, particularly Santa Fe, the capital of its northernmost province New Mexico. The Spaniards, fearful of French threats to their territory, imprisoned French traders (and later Americans) who wandered south of the Arkansas River. The Spanish government in Mexico City maintained a harsh trade monopoly in the northern provinces, forcing them to buy merchandise from Spain at exorbitant prices. Santa Fe merchants quietly rebelled, encouraging clandestine trade with the new United States. American merchants prospered in this market, with some foodstuffs, fabrics, hardware, medical supplies, and whiskey gaining them profits of 500 percent.

The Santa Fe Trail was traveled by some of the West's prominent historical figures. Kit Carson signed on as a wagon train teamster in 1826 at the tender age of 16. He worked on the Trail for three years before starting his noteworthy career as mountain man and scout. Jedediah Smith, legendary mountain man and explorer of half a continent, met his end by Comanche lances near Cimarron Spring on the Trail in 1831, reputedly killing 13 of his adversaries before expiring. Josiah Gregg made a fortune from his business interests on the Trail and wrote the bible of Manifest Destiny: *The Commerce of the Prairies* (1844).

After the Mexican War (1846-48), the U.S. Army was assigned to protect the commerce on the Trail—now entirely within the borders of the United States—from Indian raiders. In 1847 alone, "47 Americans had been killed, 330 wagons destroyed, and 6,500 animals stolen." The Comanches, Kiowas, Cheyennes, and Pawnees were all troublesome. This led to the construction of military posts to secure the Trail. During the Civil War years, these forts were a check on Confederate Texas to the south. But even the army outposts weren't entirely safe. The Kiowas, for example, ran off Fort Larned's entire herd of 172 horses in 1864. The massacres perpetrated by white settlers at Sand Creek, Colorado, in 1864, and by George Custer's Seventh Cavalry on the Washita River in Oklahoma in 1868, were partly designed to keep the Indians on the run and discourage their raiding the Santa Fe Trail. But it took the almost complete annihilation of the buffalo on the southern plains in the early 1870s to finally doom the tribes to reservations. By then the bison were being shot for sport from moving railway cars.

The advent of the railroads brought the sudden decline of the Santa Fe Trail as a trade route. The eastern terminus of the Trail (where it met the railroad) moved steadily west, and freight firms using wagons became increasingly ineffectual and lost business to the cheaper, faster, and safer railroad. When a locomotive rolled into Santa Fe on a newly built spur early in 1880, it consigned the Santa Fe Trail to history and the American imagination.

*Bill Croke is a writer in Cody, Wyoming.*


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

## WAS HAYEK A SOCIAL DEMOCRAT?

By Justin Raimondo

*Friedrich Hayek: A Biography*
*By Alan Ebenstein*
*St. Martin's Press, 320 pages, $29.95*

The opening of Alan Ebenstein's *Friedrich Hayek* hints at the book's theme: "The twentieth century will be remembered in part as a battle between classical socialism and democratic welfare state capitalism to create future societal organization." But what's this to do with Hayek, the free market champion who was neither socialist nor social democrat?

The author sloppily describes the London School of Economics, where Hayek taught, as "the font from which the revival of classical liberalism, post-World War II democratic socialism, and the welfare state emerged in Great Britain and elsewhere"—as if these were simply branches of the same tree. Ebenstein opines that Hayek was contemptuous of national sovereignty because "it hinders the dream of one human race." He quotes his subject conceding that "a classical liberal order is not necessarily one where government is minimized but where competition is maximized." We also discover Hayek was an environmentalist: "He advocated government activity in what are usually considered environmental and local 'quality of life' issues."

Ebenstein says Hayek advocated gun control, since firearms are "dangerous goods" whose sales could be restricted. Hayek's political correctness even extended to social issues like homosexuality, which—unlike guns, apparently—"is not a proper subject for coercive action for a state whose object is to minimize coercion." It's also claimed that Hayek "favored explicit government creation of laws and societal imposition of new non-coercive rules." All and all, it's an extremely odd interpretation of classical liberalism.

Ebenstein presents the pure "Austrian" school of economics of Hayek's teacher Ludwig von Mises as merely an influence on Hayekian thought. Citing a critical review by Mises of Hayek's *The Constitution of Liberty*, Ebenstein concludes that, unlike Mises, who believed the welfare state was incompatible with liberty, "Hayek was not a doctrinaire." It was "consistent" for Hayek to favor "piecemeal tinkering with the welfare state rather than its wholesale replacement" because he believed in "the insignificance of an individual's reason." Free market economist Milton Friedman is also given a platform to denigrate Mises, who is denounced as "intolerant" for holding "ridiculous" methodological views—which are summarized in a few skeletal sentences. We are told that "Mises did not develop his theory of a business, or trade, cycle as much as Hayek did." Mises's *The Theory of Money and Credit*, not to mention his monumental *Human Action*, seem to count for little in Ebenstein's book.

While the idea of Hayek as a social democrat is grossly overstated, it is true that some of his views would not seem out of place in, say, the Bush administration: vouchers, mandatory though "privatized" social insurance, and emphasis on the importance of mediating institutions as instruments of social change are all ideas Hayek could have countenanced. Ebenstein's account of Hayekian libertarianism, in fact, makes it sound quite similar to "compassionate conservatism."

Ebenstein acknowledges that Hayek grew more radical as he developed his system, positing in his final works a thoroughgoing decentralism and speculating on the possibility of "competing governments." In any case, compatibilities between certain of Hayek's views and today's Republicanism should not be taken as indicating that Hayek was philosophically wobbly. Rather this is evidence of how far mainstream American conservatism has come: Yesterday's free market radicalism has become today's conventional wisdom.

Ebenstein is right that Hayek's foreign policy views mirrored those of the social democratic Cold Warriors. For a man who was supposedly convinced that socialism was unworkable and doomed to fail, Hayek's fear of the Soviets was highly developed. During the Iranian hostage crisis he even sent a letter to the London *Times* stating that the U.S. should have commenced bombing after sending an ultimatum. I was shocked to read that, "following the June 1941 German invasion of Russia and Russia's subsequent

alliance with Britain," the author of *The Road to Serfdom* "deleted most negative references to the Soviet Union." But Ebenstein merely mentions this in passing, and then inexplicably drops it.

Stylistic clunkers abound in Ebenstein's book. In trying to tell us that Hayek was really a "communitarian," he writes: "Communitarianism is not similar values and institutions throughout a geographical area. Communitarianism is diversity of communities, not necessarily diversity in communities. Communitarian diversity is diversity of communities. Diversity is differentiation. Singularity of communities is uniformity, not diversity."

Here as in many other places, Hayek's interpreter and explainer ends up being much less illuminating, and accurate, than the original.

*Justin Raimondo is the author of* An Enemy of the State: The Life of Murray N. Rothbard.

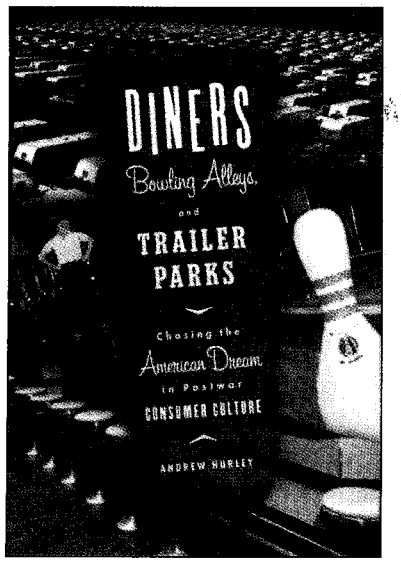
## SLIGHTS OF LIFE

By Philip Langdon

*Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in Postwar Consumer Culture*
*By Andrew Hurley*
*Basic Books, 405 pages, $27.50*

When artists, journalists, and academics first began writing about the American roadside a few decades ago, their books were joyful affairs, driven by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED




a buoyant sense of discovery. Even a footnote-heavy university press production like Warren Belasco's *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* conveyed its author's happiness at the ordinary consumption habits of Americans.

Diners were a particular delight. Dip into John Baeder's evocative *Diners* or Richard J. S. Gutman and Elliott Kaufman's *American Diner* and you sense that even the most mundane need—for quickly served, inexpensive meals—had given birth to distinctive gathering places. Books about popular commercial buildings have likewise told fascinating stories of entrepreneurs and designers and why America looks the way it does.

Alas, that first flowering of roadside and pop commercial studies has been succeeded by a second generation of books that are meticulously scholarly but little fun to read. The exhilaration that came from first piecing together the main trends of commercial development has been replaced by larger doses of minutiae and by furrowed-brow scrutiny of unhappy social implications. *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks* is a prime example.

Andrew Hurley chose to write 400 pages about diners, bowling alleys, and trailer parks because, the associate professor of history at the University of Missouri-St. Louis says, all three initially served the industrial working class but later tried to appeal to the broad center of the middle class. Diners, where rough-mannered laboring men grabbed a quick lunch or downed coffee after a night of heavy drinking, aimed for a more "respectable" customer base among middle-class families and women in the 1950s and '60s. Bowling alleys, regarded before World War II as "dreary basement dives where the poor and shiftless congregated to drink beer, spit tobacco, and make wagers on their bowling scores," tried in the 1950s and '60s to become centers of wholesome family recreation. Trailer parks tried to shed a downscale image and attract solidly middle-class residents who might want a dwelling they could relocate whenever they had an itch to experience a different section of the country.

Early bowling alleys were often appendages to neighborhood taverns. Pins were set by boys who sometimes taunted dawdling customers to hurry up, since their pay rose as more games were rolled. As long as bowling alleys depended on pin boys, they could operate only for limited hours, and it would be difficult to refine the atmosphere enough to attract families and children. Those problems were solved in 1946 by the automatic pin-setting machine, which eliminated the labor problem and let newly built suburban bowling "lanes" (nicer sounding than "alleys") present themselves as instruments of family togetherness. The number of bowlers jumped from around 10 to 15 million in 1946 to 39 million in 1964, near the peak of the sport's popularity.

Diners, attempting a similar transformation, dropped the most overtly ethnic dishes from their menus, moved the burly fry cook out of sight, and replaced the crisp aesthetic of streamlined stainless steel with fussier, more colorful decor. Real working-class hangouts dwindled. Nonetheless, the diner remake failed to fend off the onslaught by national fast food, coffee shops, and family restaurant chains. Trailer parks, tarred by tawdry novels such as *Trailer Park Woman*, never really had a chance to escape their lower-middle-class taint. Said one disenchanted resident of a "park" where privacy was scarce: "Everybody is on exhibition like in a zoo."

Parts of Hurley's book are enjoyable, especially the previously little-explored evolution of bowling alleys. Hurley could have been less repetitious and hectoring, but he has devised an ingenious argument about how the establishments and messages created by businesses in the 1950s sowed the dissatisfaction of the '60s. Hurley presents diners and bowling alleys as resembling countless other postwar commercial enterprises that turned their back on distinctive working-class culture—and downplayed the distinctiveness of almost every other slice of the American populace as well. Instead, businesses marketed their products, services, and establishments with the theme that we're one big, homogeneous society in which satisfaction springs from acquiring "respectable" but bland middle-class goods and services, whether they're meals in family restaurants, evenings in gambling-free bowling alleys, or ranch houses equipped with the latest appliances.

The '50s view that American greatness lay in the nation's skill in orchestrating mass consumption—a view espoused by Vice President Nixon during the "kitchen debate" with Nikita Khrushchev in 1959—ultimately spurred a counterattack from the Left, says Hurley. "The frustrations articulated by Betty Friedan on behalf of millions of suburban homemakers in her 1963 best seller *The Feminine Mystique* were grounded in the empty promises of fulfillment extended by the purveyors of consumer goods and services."

Hurley's is a relentlessly downbeat interpretation of the meaning of roadside enterprises. Where earlier books admired the cleverness, creativity, and nimbleness of twentieth-century commercial establishments, Hurley studiously sticks to the dark side. It's an oddly sour way of treating places that produced so many good times.

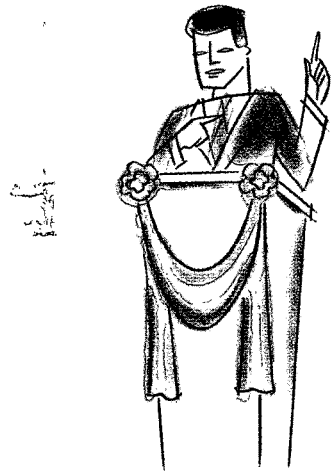
*Philip Langdon is a* TAE *contributing writer and author of* Orange Roofs, Golden Arches: The Architecture of American Chain Restaurants.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Edited by Martin Morse Wooster

# the Digest



*Summaries of important new research from the nation's universities, think tanks, and investigative publications*

## POLITICS

### Big Government Causes Big Campaign Spending

John R. Lott, Jr., "A Simple Explanation for Why Campaign Expenditures Are Increasing: The Government Is Getting Bigger," in *The Journal of Law & Economics* (October 2000), University of Chicago Press, Box 37005, Chicago, Illinois 60637.

Yale Law School scholar Lott explains why political campaigns are so expensive: "As government has more favors to grant," he writes, "the efforts spent to obtain these favors should increase."

Lott collected campaign spending data from 16 states over a period of up to 20 years. He then compared state government spending to the amount spent on state house and senate races, and found that, after adjusting for inflation, every $1,000 per resident increase in state spending led to a 54 percent increase in campaign spending.

Lott says the campaign finance debate "focuses on the symptoms and not the root causes of ever-higher expenditures." The best way to clean up campaigns is to shrink government.

## ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

### Sensible Antitrust Policy

Robert W. Hahn, "Competition Policy and the New Economy," in *The Milken Institute Review* (first quarter 2001), 1250 Fourth Street, second floor, Santa Monica, California 90401.

In the 1990s, industrial Old Economy firms began to be superseded by information-based New Economy companies. In 1970, 11 of the *Forbes* 100 companies were New Economy companies, with a combined worth of $92 billion; by the first quarter of 2000, the number had grown to 57 companies worth $5.6 trillion.

The Microsoft trial showed the difficulty of regulating New Economy enterprises using antiquated rules. American Enterprise Institute scholar Hahn offers ways antitrust rules can be modified to deal with the dynamics of the twenty-first century.

Traditionally, companies were deemed anti-competitive if they could charge prices substantially higher than their costs. But today's high-tech companies typically have very high labor costs and little or no expenses for supplies. Similarly, judging a high-tech company as "anti-competitive" because of a dominant market share can be misleading, as the software market can change dramatically when superior new products are introduced. Not long ago WordPerfect was a top word processing program; now it's obsolete and hardly used.

Hahn supports reforming, not eliminating antitrust. He points to the number of lobbyists Microsoft is forced to employ in Washington and Brussels as a sign antitrust regulators have gone too far. One reform would be to limit the power state attorney generals have in launching antitrust suits. Another would be to make a single federal agency responsible for antitrust policy. Why, Hahn asks, did *both* the Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Communications Commission have to give approval to the merger of America Online and Time Warner?

"The good news," Hahn concludes, "is that the New Economy is thriving. The bad news is that no one really knows how much its future success depends on wise public policy."

### Government as Land-grabber

Rob Gurwitt, "Land Grab," in *Governing* (January 2001), 1100 Connecticut Avenue N.W. #1300, Washington, D.C. 20036.

State and local governments have a nearly unlimited power to condemn and then to seize private property using powers of "eminent domain." Some state laws permit appropriating property that is "blighted," and define "blight" to include property with "unusual topography" or inadequate parking.

But across the country, reports *Governing* correspondent Gurwitt, citizens are fighting back, especially where government is just taking land away from existing businesses to give it to enterprises it prefers:

• Colorado Republican state representative Andy McElheny successfully restricted the ability of government to condemn property. Prior to McElheny's bill, government could use any one of eight criteria to claim land was blighted; now property must meet at least four of



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the eight. McElheny was inspired after a Denver suburb wanted to condemn a used-car dealership so it could sell the property to another enterprise.

• Merriam, Kansas, took land leased to a used-car dealership, then sold it to another car dealer. Voters responded by ousting half the city council members who approved the deal.

• Maryland voters rejected by 2-1 margins the efforts of two Democratic county executives to expand their eminent domain powers.

"All of this," writes Gurwitt, "has defenders of government land-use authority" warning that eminent domain must be used "cautiously," not recklessly.

### Beating Back the Mob

Steven Malanga, "How to Run the Mob Out of Gotham," in *City Journal* (Winter 2001), Manhattan Institute, 52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, New York 10017.

The crime-fighting efforts of New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani have not only made his city safer, but more economically vibrant as well. Manhattan Institute fellow Malanga looks at how tough city and state prosecutors have weakened mob-controlled unions and improved competition in critical city services.

Consider the Jacob Javits Convention Center: According to Malanga, when the center was opened in 1986, "mobbed-up unions" forced the city and New York state to sign contracts which paid electricians, laborers, and carpenters up to three times as much as they would be paid in other cities. Absurd rules dominated; only $80-an-hour electricians, for example, were allowed to plug equipment into sockets. According to the police, the center annually lost nearly $1 million in theft.

By 1995, the center was a money-draining boondoggle that was losing most of its major clients. Republican Governor George Pataki appointed Gerald McQueen, a tough-minded new inspector general. Working with district attorney Robert Morgenthau, McQueen implemented criminal background checks for new employees, restricted the power of most unions to hire new center staff, and renegotiated contracts to eliminate costly work rules. As a result, center revenues have gone from $36 million in 1995 to $100 million in 2000, and it is now profitable.

Prosecutors have also reclaimed the Fulton Fish Market from mob-dominated unions. Though the city owns the market, mob influence has been present since the 1920s, when Joseph "Socks" Lanza organized his fellow Italian immigrants into United Seafood Workers Local 359. Lanza, working with members of the Bonanno family, helped purchase six loading and unloading companies, allowing the union and the mob to monopolize fish distribution and rule the market "as a fiefdom."

In 1994, deputy mayor Randy Mastro launched a drive to reclaim control. The city kicked out mob-connected wholesalers and union members, then awarded the contract for fish distribution to an honest company with no mob ties. The volume of fish coming into the market rose and prices fell.

Much work remains. The mob, Malanga charges, still has a strong influence over the city's construction industry. The New York state legislature can help by repealing two old statutes: the Wicks Law, which requires government agencies to divide construction contracts into four parts instead of allowing one company to bid on the entire contract; and the prevailing wage law, which mandates union wages on all public housing projects. Congress could also outlaw "hiring halls," which allow unions to monopolize who gets hired for a particular project.

"Excessive government regulation," Malanga concludes, has made the city's construction industry "even more susceptible to mob influence."

### The Business of Avoiding Disasters

Paul R. Kleindorfer and Howard Kunreuther, "Managing Catastrophe Risk," in *Regulation* (No. 4, 2000), Cato Institute, 1000 Massachusetts Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

When major disasters occur, the government spends billions to rebuild destroyed neighborhoods. Simple preventive measures—known as "risk mitigation measures" or RMMs—could substantially reduce the damage caused by a fire, flood, or earthquake. A 1994 survey by the Insurance Institute for Property Loss Reduction, for example, reports that 62 percent of Florida homeowners whose properties were damaged by Hurricane Andrew had failed to protect their homes by installing laminated windows, roof bracing, or hurricane shutters.

The government, argues Kleindorfer and Kunreuther of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, is partially to blame for this situation, since the state is eager to bail out homeowners who don't buy private insurance. But the insurance industry could provide additional incentives for homeowners who protect their properties.

Insurers don't normally offer discounts on premiums for property owners who spend money to protect their homes against major disasters. But Kleindorfer and Kunreuther argue it would be in an insurer's interest to do so. They have produced models of earthquake-prone Oakland and flood-ridden Miami and found that property insurers could reduce their losses in a major disaster by as much as a third if homeowners spent extra money on risk reduction.

The authors offer several options property insurers could implement. They could persuade banks to offer lower-rate mortgages for more sturdily built homes, and discounted home improvement loans when they're used for risk protection. Insurers could also raise money to help finance RMMs by selling "catastrophe bonds" to investors who would receive substantial returns if a major disaster didn't happen (otherwise the bond is used to pay premiums). Such large insurers as USAA, Swiss Re, and Credit Suisse First Boston have issued these bonds to protect themselves against disasters in Florida and California.

Risk mitigation measures save homeowners money, reduce insurance payouts, and lessen the amount taxpayers have to pay after a major flood, fire, or earthquake. "The open question," Kleindorfer and Kunreuther write, "is whether policymakers, bankers, and insurers" can implement RMMs "before the next major disaster."



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

## SOCIETY

### Morality Bureaucrats

Sally Satel and Christine Stolba, "Who Needs Medical Ethics?" in *Commentary* (February 2001), 165 East 56th Street, New York, New York 10022.

The 1990s saw the rise of the "medical ethicist" or "bioethicist" who advises large hospitals, health maintenance organizations, universities, pharmaceutical companies, and politicians about the right and wrong way to practice medicine. The largest medical ethics organization, the American Society of Bioethics and Humanities, has over 1,600 members. Satel, a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, and Stolba argue that the advice medical ethicists give is at best unnecessary and at worst dubious.

Unlike the years of training required of an M.D., "there are few meaningful standards for bedside ethicists." Some are lawyers or Ph.Ds who enter bioethics after years of training. Others simply take a ten-day training session at institutions such as Georgetown University's Kennedy Institute of Ethics.

Nor is it clear what knowledge bioethicists possess that doctors don't have. University of Chicago researchers asked 100 bioethicists seven questions about a patient who appeared incapable of experiencing pain, had no knowledge of the outside world, and had very little chance of regaining consciousness. This case study is similar to one most bioethicists encounter in an introductory course. Not only was there no consensus, in six of the seven questions the bioethicists could not even form a majority opinion. This contradictory result is comparable to "discovering that 100 doctors had widely divergent opinions on how to handle" an appendicitis attack.

A 1998 survey of bioethicists' "core knowledge" included such skills as "engage in creative problem-solving," "listen well," and "communicate interest and respect." These are skills every doctor should have.

Satel and Stolba believe that if doctors let bioethicists answer ethical questions for them, then doctors will reduce their role to "the technical management of illness and injury," thus making medicine more remote and impersonal. "What is urgently needed at the bedside of patients," Satel and Stolba conclude, "is not self-styled professional ethicists, but ethical doctors. Ghettoizing the moral side of medicine is not the way to produce them."

## OTHER COUNTRIES

### The Unknown North Korea

Nicholas Eberstadt, "Disparities in Socioeconomic Development in Divided Korea: Indications and Implications," in *Asian Survey* (November/December 2000), University of California Press, 2000 Center Street #303, Berkeley, California 94704.

In June 2000, the heads of North and South Korea met for the first time since the nation split in 1945. This may be a signal that the two nations will unify in the near future. Before this happens, argues American Enterprise Institute scholar Eberstadt, it's important to know what shape North Korea's economy and population are in. Little data is available, but Eberstadt says the trends we can discern show North Korea to be one of the world's poorest nations.

There are formidable problems in understanding North Korean demography. The nation has never published official demographic statistics, and its economic statistics are suspect. But some outside agencies have conducted limited surveys, and economic information can be gathered by "mirror statistics"—data other nations have compiled about imports from and exports to North Korea.

One important survey was conducted by the European Union and the U.N. in 1998. They found that 57 percent of North Korean children under age five were unusually short for their age, a sign of malnourishment. Another survey suggests that the average North Korean seven-year-old is as much as 20 centimeters shorter than his Southern counterpart, and a South Korean demographer found that North Korean children are smaller than the typical Korean child of 1920.

Trade statistics are also gloomy. Unadjusted for inflation, North Korean trade increased by 44 percent between 1972 and 1997. By contrast, global trade increased by 1,300 percent during this period. In 1972, North Korea had trade levels equal to 27 percent of the South's. By 1997, North Korea's trade flow was only 1 percent of the South's, most of it in low-tech products: fish, gold, textiles, rice. After reunification, much of the North Korean workforce would probably have to find new jobs.

Eberstadt concludes, "it may take a generation or more of extremely rapid socioeconomic development" for a reunified North Korea to catch up to South Korea.

***FLASHBACK*** *continued from page 50*

Chevy Chase Country Club. He also loved to travel—maybe to get away from home—and became one of the most peripatetic Presidents to date.

He belonged to a party that depended on the black vote for its majorities, and it was sometimes said he was the nation's first black President—and not just figuratively speaking. The hometown rumor was that his father was of mixed race. The president never denied it: "How should I know?" he is reported to have said. "One of my ancestors might have jumped the fence."

Harding's presidency coincided with an unprecedented economic boom, fueled by record consumer spending and 2 percent unemployment, but despite the general prosperity and his personal charm, his party suffered serious reverses in the congressional elections two years into his term, and his presidency began to unravel.

As rumors of corruption swirled around them, the Hardings left Washington for a cross-country tour. In San Francisco, the president was taken ill and died, while alone with his wife. Later, a former FBI agent wrote a book claiming that the First Lady had poisoned him, to avoid impending disgrace. (For whatever reason, she refused to allow an autopsy.)

Dying when he did was probably a good career move: Comparisons to Lincoln were dusted off for the occasion. But Harding's reputation has not worn well; most historians have rated him as the worst President in the twentieth century.

Maybe that will need to be revised.

—John Shelton Reed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

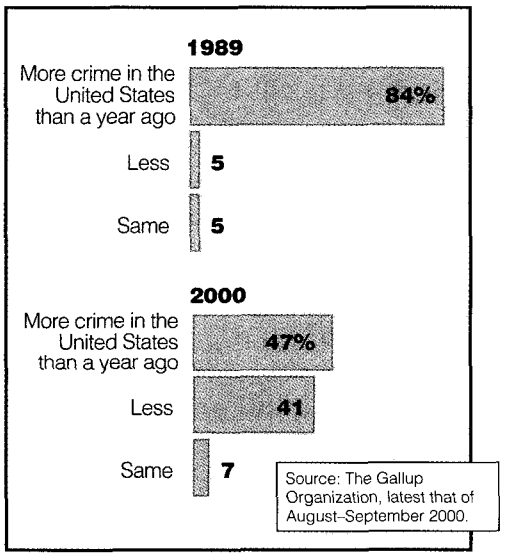
# Opinion Pulse

Edited by Karlyn Bowman

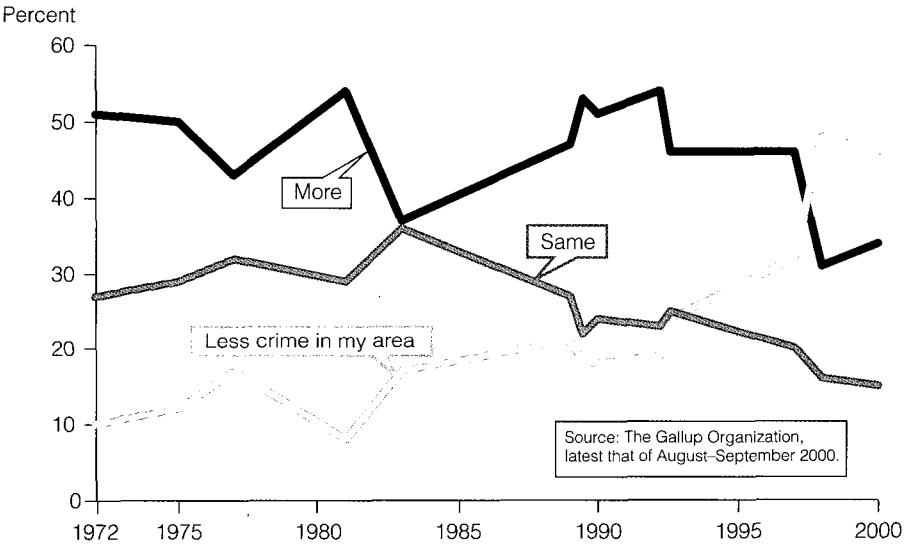
# Crime Stats: Better But Not Good

Polls support the idea that the nation is making progress on crime. Today, 46 percent say there is less crime in their area than a year ago. Only 10 percent felt that way in 1972. Far more feel that we are losing ground on the drug problem (54 percent) than feel that way about the problem of crime (38 percent). Seventy percent of Americans still say the criminal justice system is not tough enough.

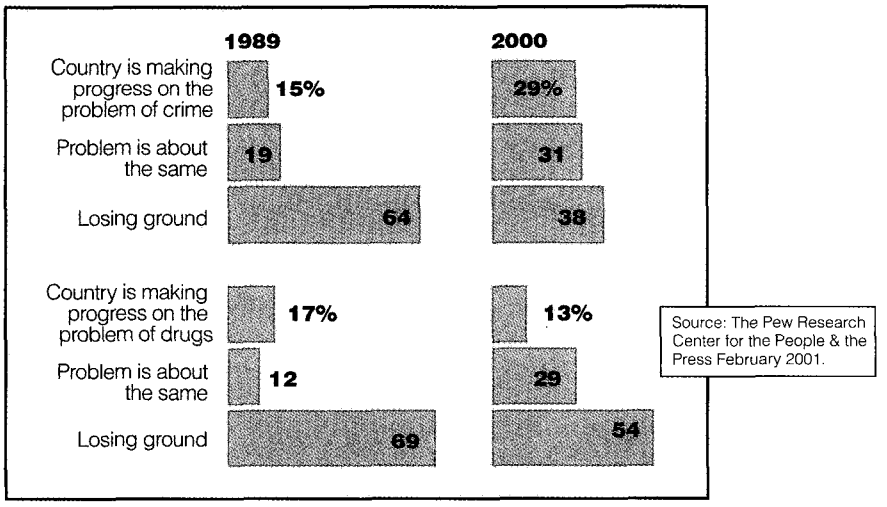
**Question:** Is there...?



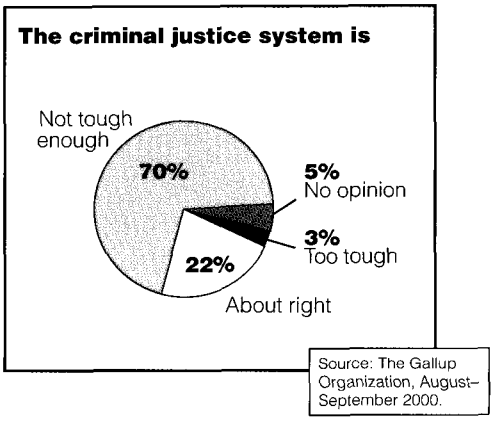

**Question:** Is there...?




**Question:** Next, as I read you some problem areas, please tell me how you think each is affecting this country today. First, do you think the ...?




**Question:** In general, do you think...?



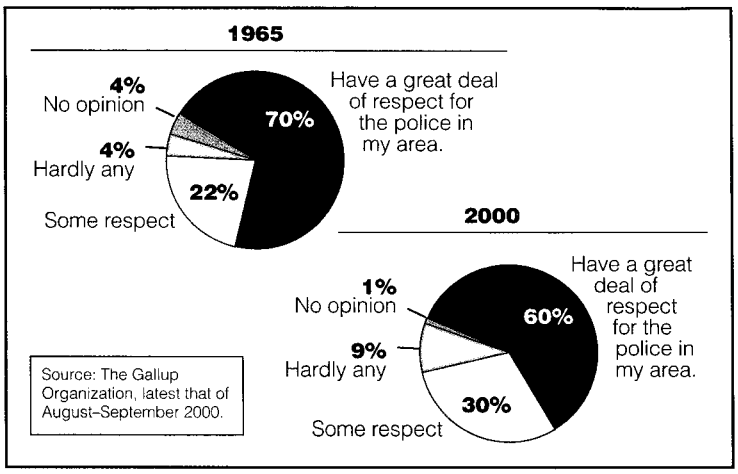



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Police Files

Six in ten Americans say they have a great deal of respect for the police in their community. The police get high marks for being helpful and friendly, lower ones for solving crime. In terms of interactions with the police, nearly six in ten say they have received a speeding ticket. Fourteen percent say they have been arrested. About a third (up from 9 percent in 1965) say there is police brutality where they live. Nearly four in ten African Americans, compared to 4 percent of whites, believe they have been stopped by the police because of their racial or ethnic background.

**Question:** How much respect...?



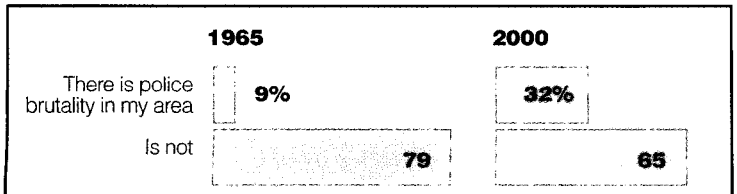

Source: The Gallup Organization, latest that of August–September 2000.

**Question:** How would you rate the police in your community on ...?

| | Excellent | Good | Only Fair | Poor |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Being helpful and friendly | 37% | 37% | 16% | 8% |
| Not using excessive force | 33 | 39 | 14 | 7 |
| Responding quickly to calls for help | 31 | 38 | 17 | 8 |
| Preventing crime | 21 | 48 | 20 | 9 |
| Treating people fairly | 24 | 43 | 19 | 10 |
| Solving crime | 16 | 47 | 23 | 7 |

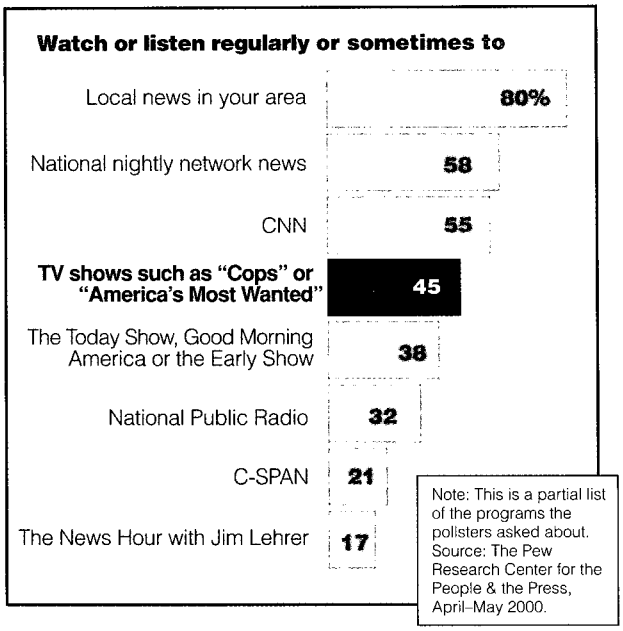
Source: Harris Interactive, February 2000.

**Question:** In some places in the nation, there have been charges of police brutality. Do you think...?



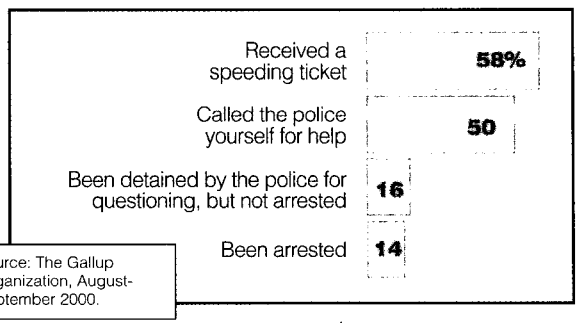

Source: The Gallup Organization, latest that of August–September 2000.

**Question:** Now I'd like to know how often you watch or listen to certain TV and radio programs....?



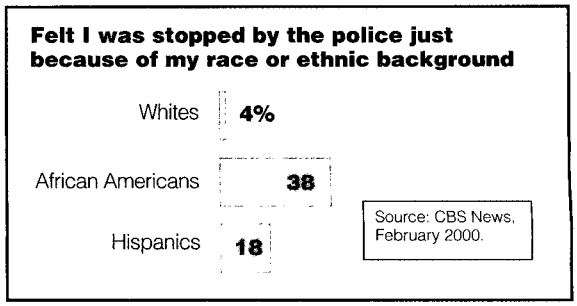

Note: This is a partial list of the programs the pollsters asked about. Source: The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, April–May 2000.

**Question:** Which, if any, of the following experiences with police officers have you personally ever had?




Source: The Gallup Organization, August-September 2000.

**Question:** Have you ever...?




Source: CBS News, February 2000.

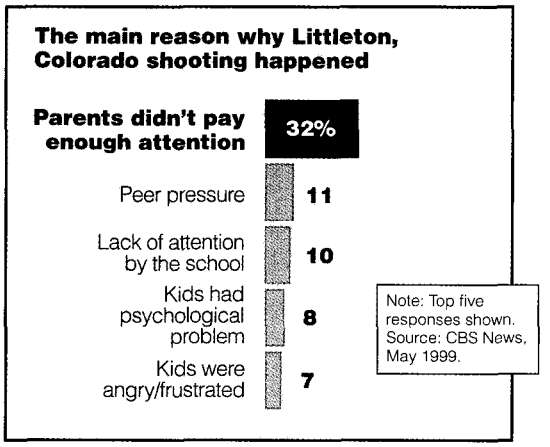


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

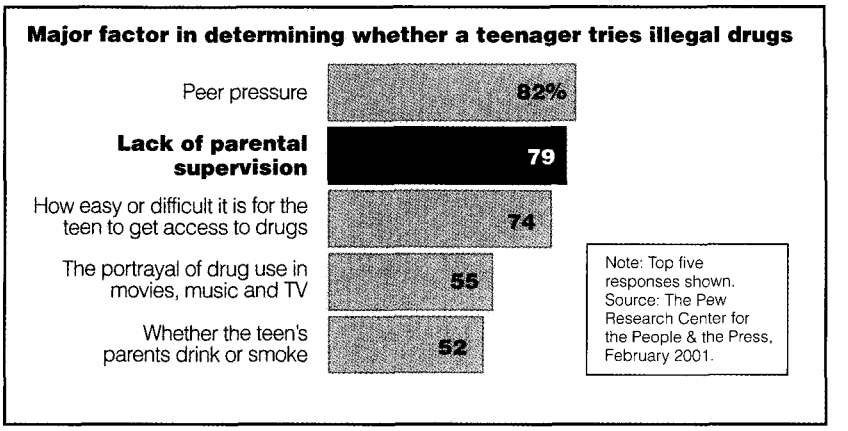
# Parents, Juveniles, and Justice

Americans are holding parents accountable for their children's criminal activity. Large majorities say parents should be held legally responsible if their child commits a crime with the parents' guns. Americans are tougher on juvenile law breakers today than they were 20 years ago. Today, large majorities believe that teenagers who commit violent crimes should be tried in the same courts as adult offenders; around a quarter say they should be given more lenient treatment in a juvenile court.

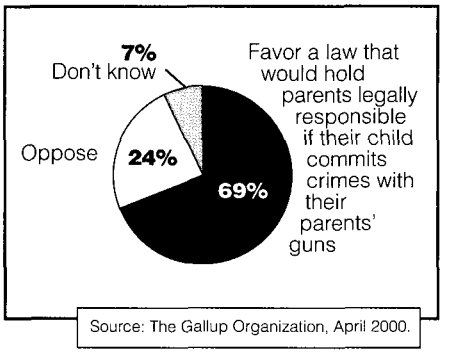
**Question:** On April 20 (1999), some high school students in Littleton, Colorado attacked and killed some of their classmates using guns, pipe bombs and other explosives. What do you think is...?



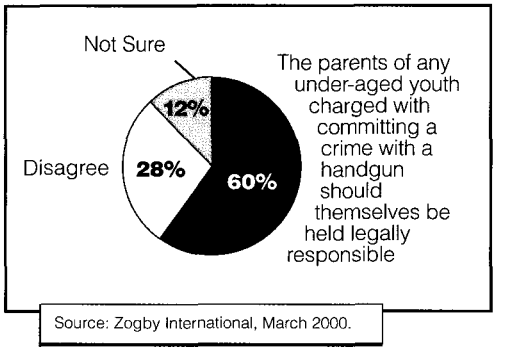

**Question:** How big a factor do you think the following things are in determining whether a teenager tries illegal drugs or not? Would you say...?



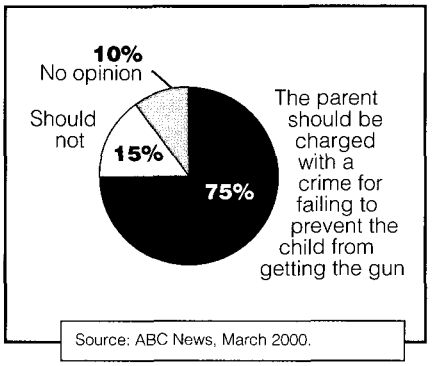

**Question:** Would you generally...?



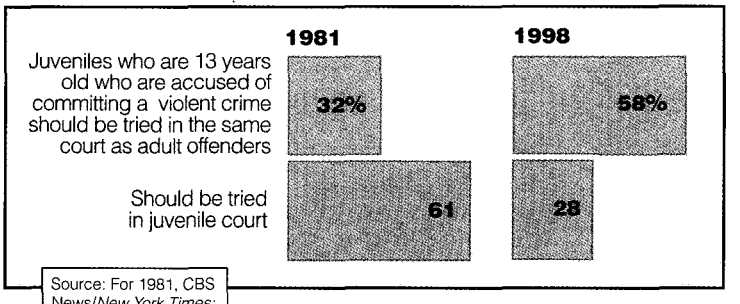

**Question:** Do you agree or disagree...?



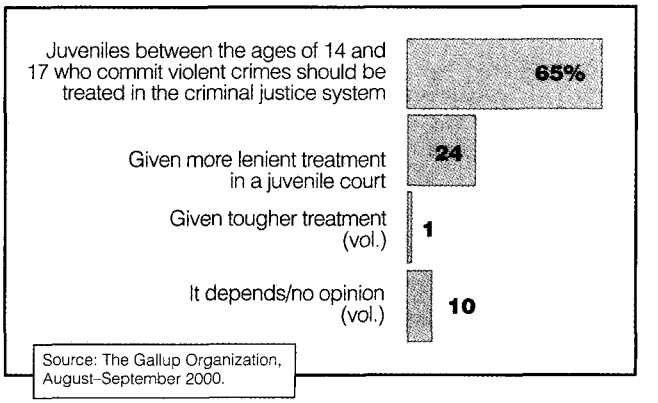

**Question:** Say a child takes a gun owned by his parents and uses it to shoot someone. Do you think...?




**Question:** There are now different laws for handling juveniles who commit crimes and adults who commit crimes. Do you think...?



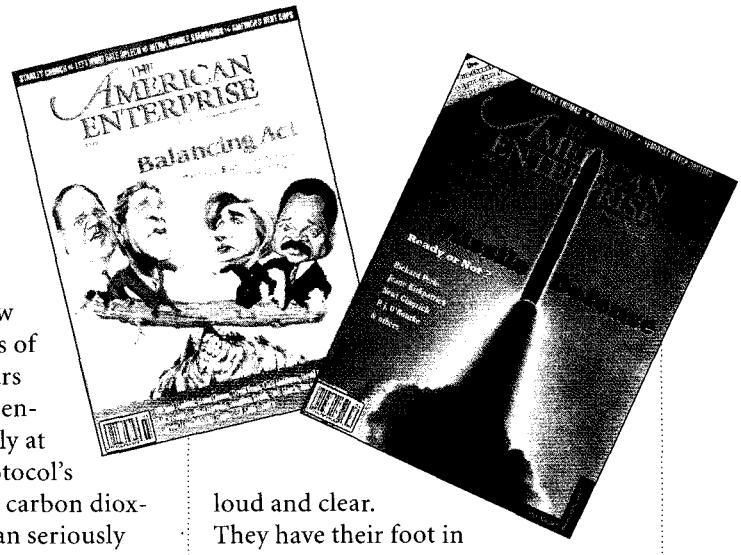

**Question:** In your view, how should ...?






LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# the Mail




I enjoyed Blake Hurst's "Left-wing Trash Talk" (March). It made me recall some of my own experiences.

A couple of years ago, my wife and I moved from the Denver area to Idaho. When we announced our intention to (liberal) friends, we were met with predictable reactions, but one in particular stuck out. A friend with impeccable liberal credentials got a horrified look on his face and exclaimed, "Idaho! But...but, there's *Mormons* out there!" He was dead serious. I've often wondered whether, had we announced plans to move to, say, New York City, he would have said, "But...but, there's *Jews* living there!" I think not.

Two years later, my wife found a job teaching at the University of Idaho. The university does a good deal of handwringing about diversity, and I can't really fault that, for Idaho just isn't a very diverse place by today's standards. Yet the liberals who preach diversity often seem willing to take potshots at Mormons, a fairly significant religious "minority" at the university. Because of their conservatism and strong religious and family values, Mormons are perceived as part of the Yahoo Nation Mr. Hurst described.

*Michael J. O'Neal*
*Moscow, Idaho*

In her list of self-inflicted wounds that have characterized U.S. energy policy over the past several years, Diana Furchtgott-Roth correctly includes the Kyoto Protocol (ECONOMIST, April/May).

With the nation facing an energy shortage that will soon become an energy crisis, America is going to have to build hundreds of new power plants and dozens of new refineries in the years just ahead. The nation's energy needs are completely at odds with the Kyoto Protocol's mandated reductions in carbon dioxide emissions. No one can seriously believe that the United States will be anywhere near meeting its targets under Kyoto by 2008-2012. But as long as the United States remains a party to the treaty, it will be used like a club by global warming advocates to beat the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases into fulfilling its "commitments."

Now that President Bush has wisely decided not to regulate carbon dioxide emissions, he could go one step further and submit the treaty to the Senate for a vote on ratification. The Kyoto Protocol stands no chance of receiving the two-thirds vote necessary for ratification. Its rejection by the Senate would be the best thing to happen to U.S. energy policy since the internal combustion engine replaced the horse as our primary means of transportation a century ago.

*Bonner R. Cohen*
*Lexington Institute*

I was dismayed by David Boaz's nearsightedness when he asked, "Where is the successor to Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan who will make the rhetorical case for freedom and limited government, and keep making it until he or she persuades a majority?" ("Governing a Divided America," March)

The political leaders making this rhetorical case are neither conservatives nor Republicans. They are Libertarians, and they are making the case loud and clear. They have their foot in the door (or at least their big toe), and they aren't going away.

*Mark Stryker*
*Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania*

Paul Kengor's review of Matthew Dallek's biography of Ronald Reagan (BOOKTALK, March) brought back some old memories.

In the early '60s I lived in Sacramento. A close friend of mine was Ed DeBolt, the executive director of the Republican state central committee. He called one day inviting my wife and me to join them for a dinner where the featured speaker was the actor Ronald Reagan.

Our table was in front of the dais. When Mr. Reagan arrived, he walked down the middle of the room, working the crowd as only he could do. His speech was delivered in his remarkable style, friendly, yet sincere. After the speech, Ed leaned over and said, "You know, that man could become President!" The rest is history.

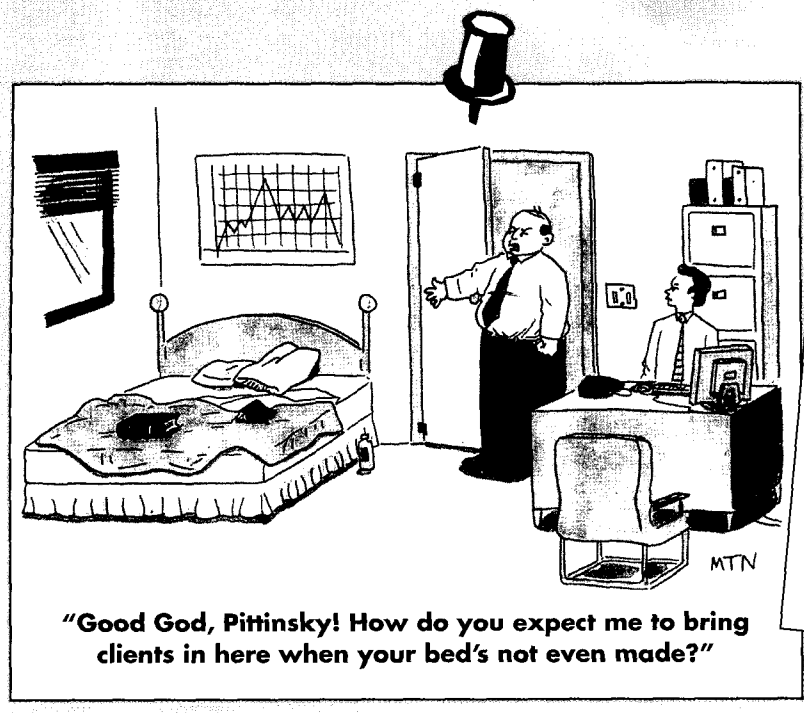
Ed DeBolt became one of Reagan's two closest advisors and spent many hours at Reagan's home. Ed always talked about what an interesting, thoughtful man Reagan was, whose goals in government were so sincere. He was not driven only by his ego, like others we have recently seen.

*H. K. "Bud" Miller*
*Weed, California*

*The American Enterprise* welcomes your comments. Send to "The Mail," The American Enterprise, 1150 17th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Or fax to (202) 862-5867. Or e-mail tae@aei.org. Please include your address and phone number. Published letters may be edited for length and clarity.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

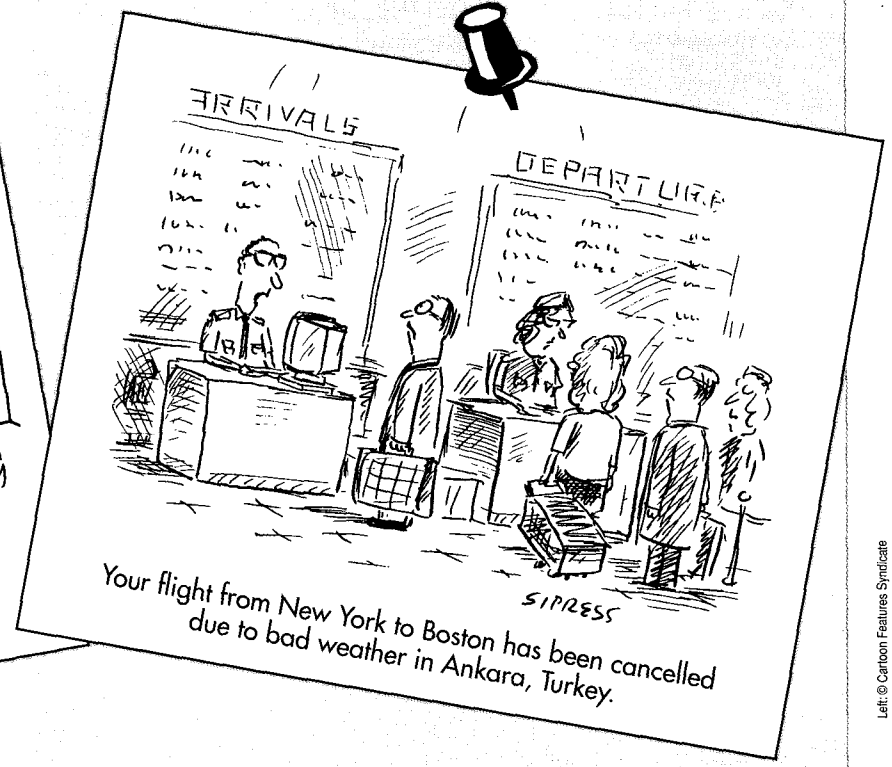



"Good God, Pittinsky! How do you expect me to bring clients in here when your bed's not even made?"

"I do *not* blame everyone else for my problems. Just you."

Left: Marc Tyler Nobleman

"I'm curious...how long have you been on hold?"




Your flight from New York to Boston has been cancelled due to bad weather in Ankara, Turkey.

Left: © Cartoon Features Syndicate



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Think Tank Special
Coming to PBS July 12
10:00 PM EST
Check Local Listings

# Think TANK
With BEN WATTENBERG

# On July 12 find out if the new money can do better than the old.

Despite recent volatility, America's economic boom has made many people extraordinarily wealthy. Forbes magazine counted almost 300 billionaires in 2000. Some estimates suggest there are as many as seven million households now worth over $1 million dollars.

But you can't take it with you. America is poised for the largest transfer of wealth in human history – bigger than even the "Gilded Age" of Rockefeller and Carnegie. In the next 55 years, as much as $135 TRILLION could flow from one generation to the next. As much as $25 TRILLION of that could go to charity.

Bill Gates has created one of the world's largest foundations virtually overnight and has already committed $1 billion to help fight infectious diseases. In part thanks to his fortune, it looks like polio might be eradicated by 2005.

Ted Forstmann has spent more than $100 million to help introduce school choice, child by child, and is testing the results.

Michael Milken has spent many millions in search of a cure for prostate cancer and plans on giving even more.

And across the country, thousands of new foundations –founded by new money – are changing the face of philanthropy.

How will this new wave of giving change America?

Tune in on July 12 for a Think Tank Special: "The Giving Boom: How the New Philanthropy Can Change America."

PBS

THINK TANK: THE PBS PROGRAM ON IDEAS

Pfizer

Invest With Confidence® T.RowePrice

Funding for THINK TANK and THINK TANK SPECIALS is provided by Pfizer, Inc., T. Rowe Price, The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, The John M. Olin Foundation, The Bernard & Irene Schwartz Foundation, the Smith Richardson Foundation, The Donner Canadian Foundation, and PBS.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

— advertisement —

A world of ideas on public policy.

## *Partnerships offer hope in sub-Saharan Africa*

***By Dr. Henry A. McKinnell***

The healthcare crisis in sub-Saharan Africa is one of the great human tragedies of our lifetimes. The magnitude of this crisis has led to a valuable debate on how best to provide healthcare to those suffering from the epidemics that are ravaging that region. The key is partnership. Through partnerships, we can replace the destructive cycle of poverty and disease with a virtuous cycle of investment and health. To do so requires a new model of cooperation among governments, private industry and nongovernmental organizations.

Each partner has a critical role to play. From national governments, for example, partnerships derive their political will. In South Africa, President Mbeki's government provides political will to support Pfizer's Diflucan program, a novel public/private alliance to ease the suffering of AIDS patients. In Botswana and Senegal, Merck has formed a partnership with the Harvard AIDS Institute and the Gates Foundation to promote AIDS prevention and expand access to care; and in the Accelerating Access Initiative, a group of pharmaceutical companies have joined with UN agencies, the World Bank and governments to provide AIDS/HIV prevention, care and treatment in Senegal and Uganda.

Political will finds expression in more than a willingness to forge new alliances. It is also evident in the creation of an economic and social climate where innovation can take root and flourish, including the protection of private and intellectual property. Facing large-scale medical emergencies, some governments have been tempted to seize the patents that drug companies hold to their discoveries, and assign those rights to others. This practice – known as "compulsory licensing" – has longer-term consequences that are highly destructive.

> ***We can replace the destructive cycle of poverty and disease with a virtuous cycle of investment and health.***

If governments weaken intellectual property rights in this way, they risk undermining both the ability and willingness of pharmaceutical companies to discover new cures and treatments. They also discourage the technology transfer that is essential to raise the quality of healthcare in the developing countries.

Governments in the developed world have an equally important role to play through "burden-sharing." The richer countries, by agreeing to pay a fair share of the costs of innovation in the marketplace, can make it possible for drug companies to provide products affordably in the poorer regions. Governments, therefore, must choose policies wisely, with an eye to the short-term and long-term benefits of their citizens and the global impact of their actions.

If governments provide the will, the private sector provides the way, securing expanded access to resources. These resources include not only medicines, but also the tools of prevention and education.

The role of NGOs and agencies is to provide needed expertise and capabilities, particularly at the field level. From these organizations, our partnerships draw expertise for improving and expanding medical infrastructure, and accurately measuring results.

As a prime example, the International Trachoma Initiative – funded by Pfizer, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – seek to eliminate the world's leading cause of preventable blindness. The donation of Pfizer's antibiotic Zithromax is only one facet of this broad-based campaign. This is not an isolated program. Since 1996, research-based pharmaceutical companies have committed more than $1.2 billion to long-term programs to fight diseases in sub-Saharan Africa and in other less-developed areas.

These partnerships are not the perfect solution, but they point the way, and their potential can be greatly magnified, given that we are entering a golden age of pharmaceutical research. Over the past two decades, drug companies have invested billions in R&D programs to discover more than forty new medicines and new indications aimed at the diseases that plague sub-Saharan Africa. Many more are on the way. A survey of pharmaceutical companies in late 2000 found 103 AIDS drugs either in clinical trials, or awaiting FDA approval. These medicines will bolster the 64 existing treatments. In 1987, there was only one.

In ensuring access to these new medicines, the watchword should be "partnership," with governments and industry ready to show that access and innovation are not antithetical concepts. It is time to expand our partnerships to a wider range of governments, companies, NGOs, and others committed to global health. Together, we can and must confront humanity's killers.

***Dr. Henry A. McKinnell is Chairman and CEO of Pfizer Inc. This article is adapted from his remarks at the 2001 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.***

PFIZER FORUM IS AN ADVERTISING SERIES SPONSORED IN THE INTEREST OF ENCOURAGING PUBLIC DISCUSSION ON POLICY QUESTIONS AND FEATURING A WIDE VARIETY OF VIEWS FROM LEADING POLICY EXPERTS. PFIZER IS A RESEARCH BASED, GLOBAL PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY. PFIZER INC, 235 EAST 42ND STREET, NEW YORK 10017-5755 USA. HTTP://WWW.PFIZER.COM

Pfizer

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED